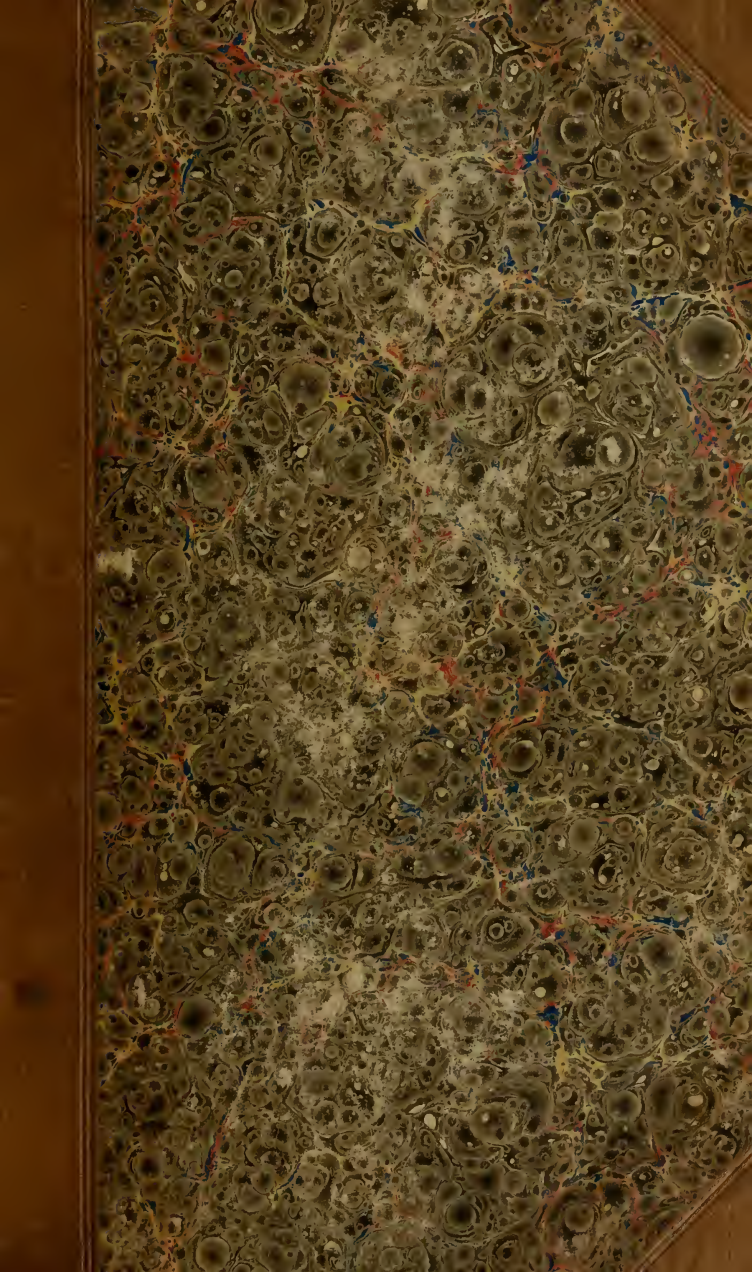
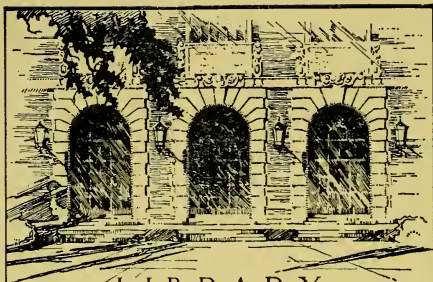


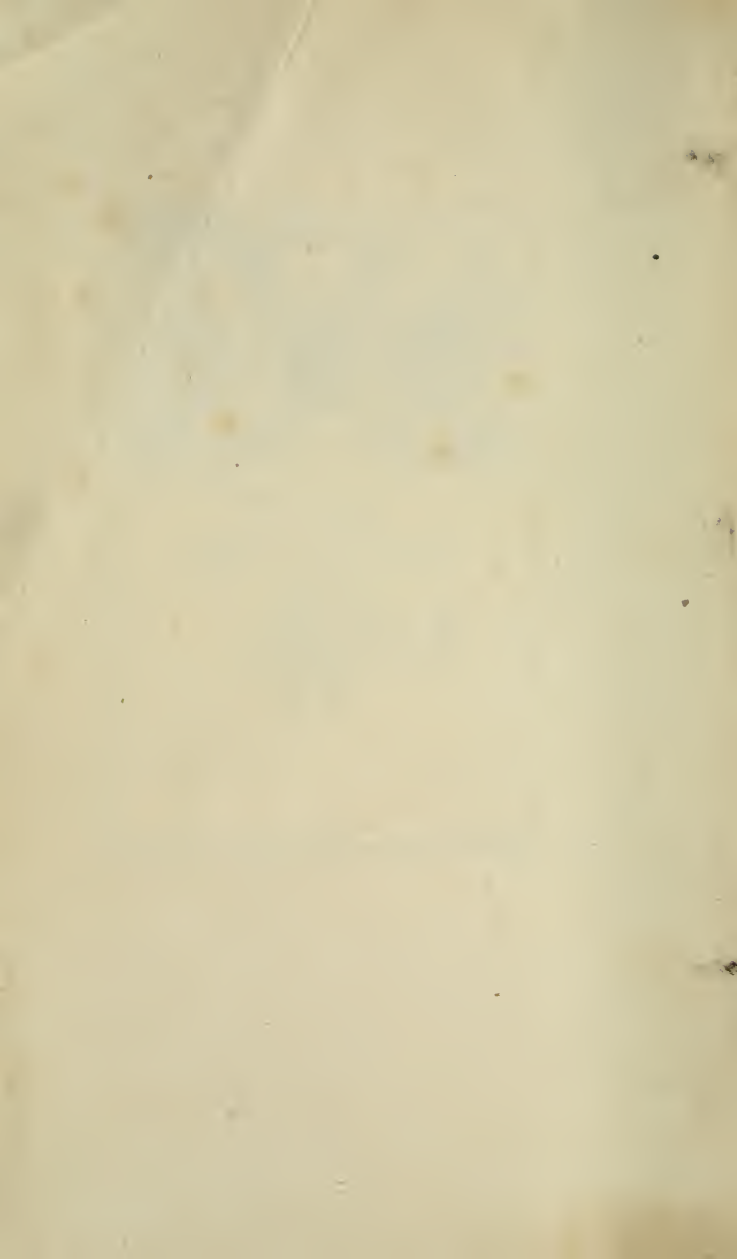




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THE LITTLE WIFE;

AND THE

BARONET'S DAUGHTERS.

BY MRS. GREY,

AUTHOR OF "THE YOUNG PRIMA DONNA," AND "THE DUKE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE BARONET'S DAUGHTERS.

" But in the human breast,
A thousand still, small voices, I awake,
Strong in their sweetness, from the soul to shake
The mantle of its rest.
I come with all my train,—
Who calls me lovely?"

MRS. HEMANS.

THE BARONET'S DAUGHTERS.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN my father returned, there was an immense disturbance in the house, on discovering that Mr. Carrysfort was missing. After a delay of an hour, I was sent for, as usual!—and I attended my father in the library, in accordance with his summons. He had heard the news from one of the footmen, who had seen Mr. Carrysfort and his carpet-bags depart, as he was cleaning the knives in the morning. I mention this, though it sounds ludicrous,

because the man laid such a stress on the coincidence, that one would have thought it had something to do with the event. Before I had time to hear what my father had to say, a note was brought to him, which had just been found on Mr. Carrysfort's table. It announced his departure, and the reason for it, and contained thanks for the hospitality our roof afforded. It concluded with best wishes to Miss Adelaide. My father was more displeased than I had ever seen him; he had heard that I was the only person, with whom Maule had held any communication, before leaving the house; and as the creature had not mentioned how he had derived his information, my father charged me with the double treachery, of having listened to a secret between himself and Gertrude, in the first place, and in the next with having divulged it to Maule Carrysfort! I was so thunderstruck at the accusation, that I dare say I looked guilty; and after that brief, agonizing pause of bewil-

derment, my torrent of justification and denial was vain. Gertrude came to my aid, and positively assured my father she had never breathed the subject to me; after sealing the letter to Colonel Denison, she had even torn and burned the copy, and took the original out in the carriage with her, to put it into the post herself!

It is not difficult to see when we are discredited; Gertrude and I were neither of us blind; so we were dismissed, one in a state of great annoyance and anger, the other, as usual, in tears! My father's closing sentence was:—"In future, I see, I must write my letters of consequence myself."

And thus did the last impress of that man's footsteps, plant a fresh supply of the seeds of the same dissension, which he began to scatter on the first evening of his arrival!

Time sped on, and Lord Ellerslie became quite domesticated with us; the unmarried sister had joined the Dowager at Ellerslie, in Lanca-

shire, and they were neither of them to come up to town till after Easter, when Frances was to be married. I was heartily glad we had the Earl to ourselves, for Lady Ellen Crewe was a most disagreeable person, and he himself was harmless enough. The more I saw of him, the more I wondered, if Frances saw him with the eyes, with which I regarded him. He was a very lively companion, and a most amiable young goose—man, I mean—but he had nothing in him—he had no head, and no conversation—he had nothing to make one feel a satisfaction in talking to him. Perhaps my ideas of marriage were “absurd and obsolete,” but my sentiments were these: that it was a sacred engagement, and only to be entered into, with the best feelings of our nature; love, reverence, and duty—that without esteem there could be little true, devoted love—that a husband should be looked up to as a superior being, revered most certainly; and that, where no

time had been employed, in forming an opinion of the man of your choice, there could be but a faint prospect of happiness. I do not say time is necessary, *positively* necessary, to form a strong attachment—far from it; every-day experience would refute such an argument; it depends on such thousands of circumstances. But . . . oh! why, so uselessly do I preach!—people all go their own way up Love's ladder—but I *must* just say, that when my eyes had been fixed on the ground for some time, with my mind revolving all these various problems, and I suddenly raised them, to meet the bright, but inexpressive face of Lord Ellerslie, my airy visions vanished, my high-flown thoughts took unto themselves wings; for I was then convinced how impossible it was, to think of chivalric devotion and duty, and look at the Earl of Ellerslie, in the same moment!—When my eyes fell again, I used to recur

to my old thoughts, and repeat to myself lines descriptive of what *I* called love !

“To worship silently at some heart’s shrine,
And feel, but paint not, all its fire in thine;

* * * * *

To hold that one, with every fault, more dear,
Than all who whisper fondness in thine ear;
To joy thee in his joy, and silently
Meet the upbraiding of his angry eye;
To bear, unshrinking, all the blows of fate,
Save that which leaves thy sorrow desolate;
Nor deem *that* woe, which thou can’st feel is still
Borne with him, and for him !” * * *

I could not question Frances—I could not talk to her on the subject, for I loved her too well ! But it saddened me more and more, as the time drew near for parting with her ; because the bright future she pictured, found no reflection in my own breast.

There was one circumstance for which we had to thank Lord Ellerslie, and that was, the acquaintance of Colonel Denison. Well might

Frances call him a fascinating man—well might she say she had never met any one like him.—Oh! how different to the man she had chosen!—He hardly knew a soul in London, from having lived so long abroad; and we knew no more of his private history, than that he was a widower, and a retired officer: but he found our house agreeable; and whilst Frances and Lord Ellerslie were carrying on conversations, *sotto voce*, in the back drawing-room, Gertrude, Colonel Denison, and I, were singing trios and duets, in the front.—Musical mornings are dangerous things!

His manners were the mildest, and most winning, that could be imagined; and he had a habit of appearing absorbed in whatever you said to him, which was delightful; because it was a silent compliment to your powers of riveting attention. We liked him very much; and I never heard anything more touching, than his voice in singing—in short, he was a

general favourite. Little Rose fell desperately in love with him, during the first week of our acquaintance, and used to blush crimson whenever his name was mentioned; but Carry did not like him—she said he was too quiet!—and she herself was the quietest little mouse that ever crept about a house. She would sit, telling her doll stories in the softest whispers, and putting it to sleep, whilst Rose was singing wild nursery songs, and making more noise than six children put together—and yet it was Rose who fell in love with the quiet man!

Week after week passed, spent constantly in his society; and I often thought, with a smile, of the time when I hated the very sound of his name! The purchase of The Holme was still pending, but the hesitation was now on Colonel Denison's side; he was not quite certain whether he would part with it; and as the House was now sitting, my father was too busy to

think of anything but speeches, and petitions ; and therefore the subject rested.

After a time, people began to talk, as they always will, and do, of Colonel Denison's admiration of one of the Miss Carrysforts, and at last it began to be whispered that it was *Miss Adelaide* ; I thought they were mistaken—I imagined Gertrude had won the preference ; and yet I remember being startled, to feel how thick and fast my heart beat, when first the whisper reached my ear, and how I veered round to see if he were in hearing ; how I knew that cheek and brow were burning, when I met the steady gaze of his mournful, deep-set eyes ! It was at a party, just crowded enough to allow people to be unobserved ; and the moment after that look of mine, he was at my side, to ask, if it had summoned him ?

How well I recollect comparing to myself, his prompt attention, and unobtrusive solicitude,

to the gallant, gay, and careless manners of my cousin, Hugh Daubigny, who was that evening in the circle of waltzers, and had, a few minutes before, been bending over my chair, with all the *empressement* of the most devoted of our train. It was very absurd of Hugh; but whenever we were in company with Colonel Denison, he invariably interposed his attention in such a way, that the Colonel, who was of course quite new to our set, and its affairs, seemed to think it best to keep in the background.

This had been the case during the whole of that evening—that happy evening! till my aunt Daubigny sent Hugh, to ask the pretty young daughter of a banker, Miss Meredith, to dance, which he had done with a very bad grace.

After that, and my frightened look at the sentence I had overheard, he approached, and asked the question of, whether it had summoned him?

“I did not speak,” was my answer.

“No, but I met your eyes; and I was just beginning to flatter myself that I had learnt to read their looks—they seemed to say ‘Come,’ as plainly as words.”

“I heard your name,” said I, “and I turned to see if you were within hearing—that was all.”

“Who could be speaking of me?” he answered, rather hurriedly; “what was said? good, or bad?”

“Neither.—But you were talking of eyes,” I continued, wishing to change the subject; “do you call those speaking eyes—Miss Meredith’s, the young lady dancing with Captain Daubigny?”

“No—they are very dark, and very lustrous, but they are not speaking. I seldom or ever saw a pair of really expressive eyes in England—not lately, certainly, except . . . but she is a child.”

He grew confused, which made me curious,

and I said, "Who?"—Low and distinct his answer came.

"Your little sister, Rose!"

That was the first moment I ever felt awkward in his presence. I do not know what colour I turned, but a conviction flashed across me, of his meaning mine, though he did not venture to say so—Rose and I were so universally acknowledged to be the image of each other! With my usual talent for making matters worse, by saying or doing too much, I began a rambling sort of defence of black eyes, and hazel, and dark blue, and dark grey, and any colour in the world, but our own wide and languid, clear light-blue. He listened, with his patient, attentive smile, till I paused, and then, in a tone which was as audible to me, as if it were breathed for the edification of the whole room, instead of my ear only, he said, in the old words of Aurelio Bertola,—

“ Il primato in questi o in quelli,
Non dipende dal colore,
Ma quegli occhi son più belli,
Che rispondono più al core!”

As we drove home that evening, my father, who had looked in, after the House was up, asked Gertrude, in *no* tone of displeasure, where she had hidden herself all the evening, and added, with a laugh, that he had been trying to find Colonel Denison as a track to her.

“ I was with the Spencers and Daubignys,” said Gertrude, “and I hardly saw Colonel Denison the whole evening ; but some one told me he was talking to Ada.”

I was glad it was dark, for I bit my lips with vexation, to find my father classing Colonel Denison with even my own dear Gertrude. Had she cared for him, or had he ever made me think he was attracted towards her, I would have buried myself in the earth—or *worse*, married a man I did not like—to get out of his way,

and avoid interfering with her; but it was not so, and I was so piqued, that I exclaimed,

“Colonel Denison was with me all the evening!”

“Humph,” said my father; “then I must say it is no proof of good taste, to allow yourself to be selected from a roomful of people, as the one object for remark and conjecture!”

“How could that be, Papa, when you did not even know where Colonel Denison was?”

“I will have no answers, Adelaide; that only makes the affair more reprehensible—it proves you must have been sitting out, instead of dancing—it is a detestable fault, in my eyes, that sitting out; and particularly with so marked a man as Colonel Denison is.”

“I never heard he was a marked man,” I persisted.

“He is marked,” continued my father, warming with his subject, as he always did, “for many reasons: for his appearance, his for-

tune, his misanthropic habits, his private history."

"What of it? " I hastily ejaculated.

"He has been a divorced man, though now a widower—all the better he *should be one*, as events happen, for he divorced his wife a year or two after their marriage. I don't say this to detract in the least from his merits, but I say it to warn you against making yourself particular with him. I will not have either of you sitting out whole evenings with men—nothing disgusts me so much. If you go to a ball, dance, if you find pleasure in such frivolity, but no more sitting out, if you please—remember, I do not speak again on this subject, but I shall observe you."

The close of this sentence was lost upon me.—I was plunged in a deep and painful reverie; until Gertrude and I were alone in our room, we never opened our lips, and then I looked at her.

"Well, Gertrude!"

“ Oh, Ada, in what a dreadful voice you spoke those words.”

There was a long pause, after these few words, for neither seemed anxious to speak. Until that evening, Col. Denison had never been made the subject of conversation; and when we two sisters found ourselves *alone with his name*, as it were, we did not know how to go on. We had never canvassed his probable intentions—we were not in the habit of indulging in that most odious of all spirits, quizzing! Therefore to open the subject, even in the solitude of our chamber, was a task of some difficulty, and much embarrassment; but Gertrude was a creature who came to one's aid, in a moment of trial, like a spirit “with healing on her wings” and she spoke first, with warm and earnest simplicity.

“ What harm does this do him?—none, dearest! It is true we are not aware of the circumstances; but we know enough to prove that *he* was not

the one to blame, or he could not have divorced her!—you see we have the law itself on our sides!”

If she had spoken volumes, nothing could have conveyed the balm of these few words. To both of us, the discovery was a shock, yet she never thought of herself—she saw, with her woman's tact, that *I* was the wounded one—she read the secret tale, of the consequence of three months' continual contact with such a man, without one single hint from me; and yet, with innate delicacy and feeling, she spoke in a plural sense, as if she felt as much as I did!

Days passed, and still Col. Denison came with Lord Ellerslie. Evenings of gaiety succeeded each other, and still he was found hovering about Gertrude, and myself. Books in every language, with the name of Ernest Denison, and his remarks and references in them, were on our tables.—Flowers of all rare kinds, were sent in three bouquets, whenever

we were to meet at different soireés ; and countless, countless withered leaves, and idle notes, and words of many meanings, were hoarded by *my heart* for years—O weary years !

At last the time approached, for the brilliant wedding. The lawyers had been hurried, till they were nearly wild, because Lord Ellerslie wished it to be before Easter, instead of after. I urged a thousand objections about Lent, but as the ceremony was to be performed by special license, they did not attend to me. I thought it a bad omen ; but my father strengthened the party against me, by saying that we could all disperse for the recess, instead of moping in a dull home, after one of its lights was put out ; so it was *to be*. I was to go to the Spencers, some very nice old people, in Norfolk, for a fortnight, and then join my father and Gertrude at Carrysfort Park ; losing the after season in town entirely, which was a matter of perfect indifference to me. The bride and bridegroom

were going abroad, and so stood the order of the march.—There were no omens, and no misadventures; but Frances was married with quiet pomp in our drawing-room, which was filled with crowds of half the peerage collected together. Lord Ellerslie's presents were superb; but I do not know anything that gave her more delight, than the young Earl's spoiling a most princely diamond, by having the coronet and cipher, engraved upon it, which even Strongitharm called *a sin*.

Well—off went Newman's eternal four greys, towards the Dover road; and in the course of time, which was unusually slow that day, the people went too, all except Hugh Daubigny and Col. Denison;—they remained to dinner, and the former took occasion to tell me, before we parted, with an air that might have justified Col. Denison, or anybody else, in thinking he was on the point of proposing, that the Spencers

had invited him also for Easter, and therefore we should meet.—

“Gertrude,” said I, before we closed our eyes, “I must put a stop to this fancy of Hugh’s, for assuming that look of speechless adoration, before people ; it is quite absurd—he dare not do it in the presence of Aunt Daubigny, and it shall be nipped in the bud, or we shall both be called engaged to him !—If he kept it up in private, it would be different ; but it is entirely for effect, and I cannot suffer it. Did you hear him ask me, with that volley of looks this evening, to sing him some song, which he called ‘our song !’ ”

“I heard it,” interrupted Gertrude, eagerly, “and Colonel Denison asked me very quickly, which song it was ; I said, instantly that I was quite positive, Hugh knew no more which song he meant, than you did, and I much doubted if he knew one song from another !”

My mind however was made up, and the very

first day that Hugh, and I, found ourselves alone in a shrubbery, which was the day after my arrival at the Spencers, I told him that his manner was exceedingly disagreeable to both Gertrude and myself in public, as we were constantly hearing, first one and then the other, given to him as a Mrs. Daubigny.—I never saw him so utterly “taken back!”—There is no expression which will do, but that; he was silent at first, and then flew into a passion, abused me, told me, to my profound astonishment, that I was preparing him to behave well before Col. Denison, who was hourly expected; declared and vowed it would give him much pleasure, to see “the fellow,” in a state of condemnation; then softened into his own affectionate self, swore he loved me better than his life, and flinging his arm round my waist, assured me that I was trifling with his affections!

It is the fate of some people to be always

playing a part in scenes. Much as I hated them, it certainly was mine ; and although I felt more inclined to laugh than anything else, I saw he was really in earnest, and tried in consequence to be serious—I told him it would have been much better had Miss Meredith been in my place, as it was all lost upon me, and I hoped he would retract all the nonsense he had been saying, for if he did so, I should also forget it, and go on the same as ever.—His only answer was,

“ You are a flirt, and a coquette, Adelaide !” uttered with an air of offended dignity.

“ Neither,” I answered, coolly.

“ Both !” he repeated, in the most rude manner ; “ you have wrung a confession from my lips, and that only for the purpose of ridiculing me—you have thrown that golden mummy at me, Miss Meredith, and broadly hinted I would marry for wealth—moreover you have encouraged me, and now, . . .”

"Never !" said I, firing up, "never in my life !"

"You mean to say," said Hugh, "that you never liked me?—cared for me?"

"Never beyond a brother, or a cousin."

"That's a *come off*," was the polite rejoinder ;
"think once more."

"There is no need, dear fiery Hugh!—even supposing I did care for you, Aunt Daubigny would never hear of it.—Do not fly in the face of your parents for me, because I should not appreciate the sacrifice ! You are a dear soul, but as to a husband!—oh no!—pray let us go home now, and pray repeat nothing of this; only remember all I have said to you."

Men are not guilty of the little *meannesses*, passing between women. Had Hugh been a woman, he would have told me, he "saw through me,"—that I was sending him back to make the coast clear, for some one else: as it was, he preserved a gloomy brow, and profound silence,

and only grumbled something about his "leave of absence being very short this time."

I cannot say, I was perfectly happy, during the first few days of my visit to the Spencers, for Hugh was as annoying as ever, and I missed my sister Gertrude—I missed my father's constant endeavours to make me perfect—I missed the sound of Rose's merry feet, over my head in the morning, and the wailing sob of hen-pecked Carry, at different hours of the day. But at last, a time came, when nothing was missed; it was when the tall athletic figure of Colonel Denison walked by my side through parks, and fields, and lanes, and when I felt, though I did not see, those eyes, that face, beaming down on mine, saying more than words could ever as forcibly express. And yet much was said, and my heart learnt to beat quicker at the lowest, lightest sound of his voice, my ear learnt to know his step amongst the numbers round me there, and I was happy!—

oh, I was happy then!—For the first time in my life, I knew what it was, to have

“ A thought to which all other thoughts refer,
A hope from whence all other hopes arise,
Nursed in the solitude of happiness !”

Well!—I am old—there is no harm in looking back upon all this—it cheers whilst it saddens—it was a gleam of bliss not granted long.

CHAPTER II.

IT was pleasant to find myself at home once more, in spite of all I had left behind me!—I had so much to return to—*there* was the blessing of sisters!—it made one so sure of a warm greeting, and a heartfelt welcome!—Then there was so much to talk about—so many events had happened during my immense absence, of a fortnight—Frances had written from Paris; and my father had had rather an angry interview with Maule Carrysfort; so much so,—that Maule stamped, and said he would never enter the gates of the park again, till Miss Adelaide—no,

I forgot—I was now Miss Carrysfort!—came back; Gertrude had been requested to share the cares of a curate's home, and declined; Carry had shed a front tooth, and looked dreadful; and Rose had been vaccinated from a very fine child in the village. All these circumstances were communicated to me in a running conversation, and my readers may smile when I tell them, with what deep interest I listened to each trifling, or important particular.

Of my own affairs I said nothing, till the next morning, when Gertrude and I flew out, with our light hearts, into the beautiful green lanes, round Carrysfort Park; there, with no ear to hear, and only the bright heavens above, and around us, I told her how far Colonel Denison had ventured, and what I thought the result would be, when we returned to town again. The dear girl, who entered so fully into my griefs, took an equally energetic share in my happiness; so many a joyous hour was spent

by us, in bright visionings of the future. Gertrude seemed only rather surprised that he had not spoken before I left the Spencers, because in all I told her of his speeches, she remarked, and very justly, that he had said nothing to commit himself, and that even at that moment he was bound by no pledge—honour we put quite aside ; for Frances had often said to us, “ I have the highest opinion of men’s honour amongst themselves ; but you may depend upon t, there is very little in the case, where we women, with our interests and affections, are concerned ! ”

This might be one of the many worldly maxims she constantly sported, but we thought it must be true, simply because we had heard it from her lips.

As Gertrude and I walked on, without knowing where we went, we were arrested by a small gate, which led straight into the Holme

property, and commanded a view of the crazy old house. It was with no small interest that we stopped and gazed—Gertrude said, laughing,

“It looks like an omen, finding ourselves here, for I do not think we ever stopped at this gate before—I hardly remember the gate even.”

“That is easily explained,” I answered ; “do you not remember we always avoided it, because it is the short way across the fields to the wretched attorney’s cottage?”

“Ah!” smiled Gertrude, “we did not know then, that it led to more than one place in the world!”

My father had scarcely spoken to me upon any subject since my return, for the coolness which had marked his manner, after Maule Carrysfort’s inexplicable discovery, of the letter to Colonel Denison, still extended itself to me, although Gertrude was in favor again. At last, one morning, I was told through her, to receive

some commands in person, and I repaired to the blue room, as the study was called—and there I found my father.

“Sit down,” were the first words he said, and then I saw an *unwonted* severity on his brow ;—I began to feel very cold, but I preferred standing, because I often fancied, when my father got very angry, that the sight of my figure, towering even above that of Frances, kept him from looking down upon me !—and weak as it may seem, I quailed at contempt, whilst anger passed over my head, like a thunder-cloud.

“I have not much to say to you,” he continued, “except that you may either remain here, during the season in London, or return with me on Friday next.”

This was Monday.—

“Return with you, *certainly*,” said I, hastily.

“I am glad of it—that removes one difficulty,” pursued my father ; “now I have only

two things more to say to you—I desire in the first place, that nothing tempts you to allow Maule Carrysfort any sort of interview with you. The man is a rogue, and a villain; though, as circumstances stand, I do not choose to tell him so—he has the management of so many of my affairs, that as a relation, it would neither be politic, or possible, to shake him off.—He has never entered this house since I first arrived: but I have reason to believe, he will find means to communicate with you, and I forbid it; remember—I will have no secret plotting.”

“Good heavens!” I ejaculated, “am I thought capable of even *this*!”

“In the second place, I beg that on no possible pretence, you extend either walks, or drives, towards the Holme—you and your sisters are to keep entirely on *this* side—there are miles enough beyond this house on the left, without going to the right; and therefore I

expect my caution will be remembered. That is all—no, one more point—Gertrude does not look well—she will therefore travel more slowly with me, and we start on Wednesday.”

Mystery upon mystery!—what would I have given now, for Maule Carrysfort’s power of knowing everything!—for we were never allowed to ask questions, or reasons, when orders were issued; so I left the room, overwhelmed with bewildering thoughts. Gertrude to go on Wednesday, and I not till Friday?—Gertrude not looking well?—I, I, the free, the unfettered by control hitherto, as far as choice of companions or friends extended, forbidden to have any “interview,” as papa expressed it, with Maule Carrysfort?—I am afraid the spirit of contrariety was within me, for certainly I never felt, in my whole life before, any wish to speak to that creature, either rudely or civilly; yet now a certain indefinable feeling stole over me, which I could only embody in these words,—

“If I could see him, it were well with me!”

As I fancied that my father had spoken in confidence, I would not see Gertrude before I had shut myself up in my room, and considered what was best to be done. What could the prohibition possibly mean, about not going near the grounds of the Holme? Could it be because they were a short cut to the village, and Maule Carrysfort?—or was it—could it—oh, could it relate in any way to Colonel Denison? From the instant this idea entered into my head, I began pacing the room most uneasily, when a note was suddenly placed in my hands. I did not know the hand, and tore it violently open—it is too characteristic to be overlooked.

“I want to speak to you, Adelaide, Madam; I shall not come to you, so you must come here to my home, directly. Your father is

miles away, for he is gone to York. *I happen to know, but that don't matter;* but I must say something to you about Colonel Denison.

“MAULE CARRYSFORT.”

CHAPTER III.

IT was a pity that this strange document should have reached me, just at the moment when I felt that duty would wrestle in vain, with inclination — every thing, too, favoured the act of disobedience. I might as well have attempted to stem a mountain torrent, as my precipitate actions ; and yet I had never been guilty of any open breach of duty before, and the *first* was the most difficult to overcome.

I tried to pause, but no—that last line of his note won the victory, and with the speed

of light, I left the house, and took my way to the Attorney's shabby home.

"You wanted me—I came," was my breathless introduction; "be quick, and do not detain me."

I stop one second, to say, that when I darted into the room, Maule Carrysfort was sitting at a table, with his hands clasped over his mouth, and his shaggy grey eyebrows lowered till his eyes were hardly visible.

"I knew you'd come," said he, raising them with the smile of the cynic, that he was; "*I* knew what would bring you,—at least I thought I did; and now I'm all right—sit down—you need not colour so, ma'am, though you *are* disobeying your father!"

So he knew *that*, did he?—what in this universe did the man *not* know!

"Adelaide, ma'am," he continued, rising from his seat; "I am going to be abrupt, because we have neither of us time to waste in

compliments—once before I have told you I liked you; and now I am going to prove it, by telling what you ought to know.”

“If,” I interrupted, “it is anything purposely withheld from me by my father, I will not listen, Mr. Carrysfort!”

“It is not—don’t be passionate.”

“You ... you told me ...” said I, hesitating, “that it related to ... to ...”

“Pshaw,” muttered Maule, turning away, “I’m too old to be minded!—speak out!—relating to Colonel Denison?—so I did, and so it does, and now for it.—Your father is deceiving you, and deceiving himself—he tells you to avoid The Holme side of his grounds, and he extends his order to your sisters, *as a blind for you*; but he is blind himself—now, don’t interrupt me—he does not issue these injunctions to keep you out of *my* way, but to keep your sister Gertrude safe!—*Colonel Denison is coming here*—now, you need not turn so white, for

I am too old to mind what you feel—he is coming here, and Sir Edmund thinks it is for his daughter Gertrude, but, Adelaide, *it is for you.*”

He paused, and I placed one hand over my eyes, and clung to the back of a chair.

Maule Carrysfort spoke again, but his voice was changed then—it was thick and trembling, and he ceased his eternal “devil’s tattoo.”

“Adelaide, you knew this?”

“I did *not*,” I murmured.

“You know he loves you?”

I could not answer that!—it was too dreadful from those lips!—and yet it was gently said—not harshly or rudely, but with earnest, trembling kindness. Again he spoke,—

“This is the reason Gertrude is hurried away—this is the reason she is forbidden, *not you*, to go near The Holme.—Adelaide, if I wound you, forgive me; but as I have begun, I must finish: and it is my deep interest in you—in

you, the neglected one!—that makes me speak!
—Before you allow this attachment to weigh for one moment on your heart, will you not look into this man's private history?"

"I know it!" I exclaimed, eagerly; "it was my father himself who first told us of it!"

"Yes—when he thought Gertrude was the object!—not till that night."

"You wrong him, Mr. Carrysfort; I will not stay, and hear one word against him!"

"That is right—fly out, but you will hear me, notwithstanding—how much of the story do you know?"

"This," I replied, though my heart was bursting with indignation; "that Colonel Denison is a divorced man—that he divorced his wife, I mean."

"What more?" said Maule, impatiently.

"Nothing, except that the fault was hers, not his; death has effaced it now, so let it rest."

"*Death?*" enquired the attorney, in almost a whisper, whilst he advanced to me, and forcibly seated me on a sofa; "did he tell you *that?*"

"N . . . o !" said I, faintly, whilst a cold tremor came over me; "but I . . . I always heard . . . or else I understood . . . he was a widower."

Maule Carrysfort walked away again, and I heard him mutter, "Poor child." I sat as if I had been frozen to my seat. I could not speak or move—a dread of breaking the death-like silence, kept me still, and then he spoke himself,—

"I *must* tell you, though it is possible you may not mind.—Few know it, but *I* do, though that don't matter—it is my interest in you that makes me run the risk, and my knowledge of the principles you profess. I have heard you speak on the very subject, or perhaps I might have left you to find it out.—Adelaide, my dear, *Colonel Denison is not a widower !*"

I clenched my hands more tightly, but still I was silent: I held my under-lip in my teeth till the blood started. Maule Carrysfort stood transformed before me—he was no longer the “wretched attorney,” but a friend checking me on the brink of the abyss; besides, he was speaking on á hallowed subject, and I would not lose one word, or one sound, that breathed *that name!* And yet, I did not see him clearly . . . somehow, there was such a mist in the room . . . it was strange, for the sun was shining when I entered it . . . it was all strange, for he seemed to me to be repeating the words a thousand times, dinning them into my ears . . . surely there was no need of that?

“He is a divorced man, it is true—I know that—the act passed just sixteen years ago;—but, if what I suspect be the case, you ought to know the whole truth—*his wife is not dead!*”

Another silence prevailed, and then the power of speech returned to me; and with a voice, scarcely articulate, I gasped out,

"You have known this—how long?"

He fixed his keen grey eyes upon me, and I closed mine, as if a sudden flash of light had pained them.

"Years!" he abruptly answered; "I told you in London I knew all about him—I knew Ernest Den"

"Oh! for pity's sake, hush!" was the exclamation I was betrayed into, when the cherished name was so profanely uttered.

"Well, well," he continued, as if softened by my gesture of anguish; "I knew him as a boy—he was married at three-and-twenty—cheated into a match, and divorced the frivolous, heartless girl, two years after. Some people think that act makes all straight—I don't, nor do you, or I would have left you to find it out, as I said; *but the wife is alive.*"

"Then!" I cried, suddenly, waking to all the bitterness of the trial; "may God in mercy forgive you, for having allowed matters to go so

far, thus leaving met in the dark—enlightening me only, when it would have been charity to have left me ignorant ! Oh ! Maule Carrysfort ! if you had felt the interest you profess, this never would have been !—if you had had the friendship of which you talk, you would have told me before. Now, only one word before I go ; *does* my father know of it ?”

“ *He does,*” said the attorney, with more sadness than I ever thought he could assume ; “ he heard it from me, and he never moved a muscle of his face. Sir Edmund Carrysfort is a man of the world, and in his eyes the code of the world is law—the law of man, he thinks as perfect as the law of”

“ Once again,” I interrupted, “ not one syllable against my father !”

“ I have finished,” muttered Maule Carrysfort, and he silently opened the door for me.

It was dusk—the *twilight* dusk which enables one to see dark shadows of things, and people ;

but nothing more. I had to pass through the little gate before mentioned, and as I did so, a horseman flew past, over the hard dry gravel road, towards our house, and I stopped at the gate—I knew it was my father, and a sudden revulsion of feeling, melted the burning fever of my indignation. I leant on the low wall, and pressing my forehead on its cold damp stones, sobbed in the utter anguish of my bruised and wounded spirit !

CHAPTER IV.

IN the dark, the gloomy, spacious room, sacred to the memory of my mother, and so rarely entered, that I knew I should be undisturbed, I sat me down I flung my bonnet on the ground, and I looked up to the picture of that lost, lamented mother—a stream of moonlight, made the features perfectly distinct; and tears, tears that I once despised, stole gradually from my eyes, slid down the lashes, and fell in heavy burning drops upon my hands—

“ Oh that those lips had language !—Life hath pass'd
With me but roughly since I saw thee last !”

She was very beautiful, and Gertrude was like

her; but still I was also her child—I was entitled to an equal share of parental love, but I did not receive it—and yet the very act of gazing on her, softened my feelings of injury, and turned my bitterness to grief alone.

How dreadful, I remember, it was, to be roused from this lethargy of condensed sorrow, to have to shake off the load of bewildering thoughts, to return in short, “back to busy life again,” at the first dinner-bell! But

“There are sorrows
Where of necessity the soul must be
Its own support.”

And as I was certain I had all the “*suite funeste*” of this discovery to endure, I bore up, and hoarded my strength, for the remainder of my trial. The hour came, and Gertrude rose and left me alone with my father; his tone had been infinitely kinder during the whole of dinner, than I had known it for some time; but I, with my want of penetration, had attributed it

to my acquiescence in his plan of travelling home again, or perhaps to my long absence, for I had hardly ever left him for a day even, till I went to the Spencers—that unlucky visit !

As soon as we were alone, he walked to his desk, and took out two letters—

“Adelaide, I have been highly gratified to-day ; on my return from York, I received three letters, and one is to you What is the matter?”

I shook,—shook visibly,—and felt myself turning sick, and faint, as I murmured, “Nothing—pray go on.”

“I need hardly tell you, they are from Colonel Denison ; and as I believe he is by this time in York, waiting our reply, I have only to say, that mine is written, and have no doubt yours will corroborate what I have stated.”

“Give it,” said I, stretching out my hand, and turning my head away, whilst I was choking from the violent effort of controlling myself ; “give it—let me take it to—to Gertrude.”

“Gertrude?—no, my dear Adelaide; is it possible you have been deceived by appearances, as well as myself? Colonel Denison’s proposals are to you.”

I do not know what there was in papa’s tone, whether it was the term of endearment, or the sight of that well-known, dear handwriting, just before my eyes; but I flung my arms passionately on the table, and hiding my face in them, I sobbed out,

“Have some mercy, some pity on me, for I cannot bear it!—take that letter away!”

A bitter, a harrowing scene followed—the more severe my father grew, the more firmly did I stand my ground. Colonel Denison must be refused, and I would hear of nothing else—I told my father, that he must see by the struggle I had in acting, as I thought rightly, and religiously, that the sacrifice was no ordinary one; on the contrary, that the idea of thus outraging my feelings, must be very, very rooted, for me

to stand the shock thus steadily. Though the woman's heart quailed, the principle was strong, and therefore Colonel Denison must know the truth.

"You are a most inexplicable person," exclaimed my father, vehemently; "and I solemnly affirm, that had this letter been addressed even to Gertrude, I should have been most highly"

"*Even to Gertrude?*" burst from my lips, as I dashed a fresh gush of tears from my eyes; "Oh! why say, *even* to her?—why add to my wretchedness, by that cruel word?—why make me feel myself less dear than her, and make me think you would give me to a man, not good enough for her! God forgive me, though, if that seems to reflect for one moment on *him*!—no—tell him my simple reason—tell him, if you like, that time may remove the obstacle; hint *that* to him, if you can—do not let him think Oh papa! how can I dictate in such a

case?—I cannot!—I feel I cannot!—tell him nothing, but the plain, simple truth; and I know his upright heart will own that I am justified!”

My father seemed struck by my impetuosity, and let the first burst of it pass; and then, with my head buried in my folded arms, I heard his pen rapidly tracing some reply. When it was completed, he rang the bell, took the letter outside the door himself, gave some order, and in about five minutes, I heard the heavy tramp of horses' feet, crushing down the gravel sweep from the hall-door. When the sound was quite lost in the distance, he spoke to me; and when I did not answer, he pressed his hand upon my head.

“My dear child, believe me, I am grieved; if I was harsh, I did not mean it, but I was vexed to see you throwing happiness away!”

Oh heaven be thanked! for those kind, kind words!—almost the first I ever heard!—Where

severity only roused me to fury, kindness broke my heart; and I am sure I felt then, how far easier it was to bear the scourge, than hear those soothing words!—I asked him what he had said in the answer, and he would not tell me, more than that it was sufficient—I took the precious letter from his hand, and hid it in my bosom—I had no courage to break the seal, and it would have been agony to destroy it; so I kept it, till I could venture to read. Not a word fell from my father's lips, as to my interview with Maule Carrysfort, and yet he must have suspected, even known it, by my giving the reason of my rejection of Colonel Denison. Papa knew that I was not acquainted with that reason, when I arrived at Carrysfort Park, from the Spencers'; but I suppose he saw I was in no state to bear more.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER a night of sleepless sadness, I rose to try and distract my mind, by interesting myself about Gertrude's departure; and I would not let my thoughts dwell on the dreary prospect of two days in our deserted home without her, subject to the harassing visits of country neighbours; so I commenced arranging with her all the different stages and inns, when suddenly the hall-bell rang, with a furious peal, and within ten minutes afterwards, I was told, "Sir Edmund begged Miss Carrysfort would come down to the blue room." It has often since, been a matter of great astonishment to me, that I never

for a moment suspected why I was sent for, but ran down, totally unconscious of what I was to encounter. I entered the room, saw a figure standing back to the light, had just time to say, "Did you want me, papa?" when Colonel Denison started forward, and seizing both my hands, exclaimed,

"Adelaide, *what* am I to think of this?"

Years—long, long years have passed 'twixt this and then, and the power to paint the feelings of the time, has almost faded with the weary lapse. I find the effort vain—no pen can trace the scene—I almost think it had been better missed; and yet it is the one so intimately connected with my thread of life, that the history would be incomplete and disjointed without it.

Well, I will breathe, and then go on. His address was passionate, and despairing—it was reproachful too, for he said, that after our last parting, he had had reason to expect a very different reply to his letter.

“ Yes,” I answered ; “ but do me the justice to remember, that I was not then aware I mean, I”

“ Adelaide ! be open with me ; give me at least a reason for this stunning blow !” said he, at last, in a voice of grieved reproach, when he had waited in vain for words, which I could not frame ; “ it was utterly impossible I could be satisfied with Sir Edmund’s reason—I could not, where so much was staked !—impossible !”

This was the worst of all—this was the point to which I alluded—this was the wretchedness, the misery of the whole !—to think that my father had given an insufficient reason, to a man of Colonel Denison’s warm feelings, brought him over, as might be concluded, and expected, to Carrysfort Park ; and then left me to explain for myself, in a personal interview, *such* a reason, with nothing but my own weak, sinking heart, to be my stay !

How I went through it, I know not—half was

told by me, and half was guessed by him ; and when the explanation was completed, I recollect his raising both my hands to his lips—I recollect his words also, they still echo upon my memory.

“ Had you read my letter, this would have been spared us both. I felt from the first, it was what I had to dread ; and since your scruples are so strong, I love you too well, to try to shake them, dreadful as the struggle is to yield ! We must part, dearest !—look up, Adelaide ! look at me once more !—once, once more ! and I will leave you ; but do not speak—I cannot bear to hear your voice again ! Bless you, bless you, Adelaide !—yet just say one word !—only one, and then”

“ Leave me, I implore you !”—

Grief takes attitudes, which speak despair, nearly as plainly as words. I slid from the large chair, in which he had left me, and knelt upon the ground, with my brow resting on the edge of the table;—how long I was in this po-

sition, I do not know, for when I next saw Gertrude, it was in my own room ; and her fresh cool cheek was pressed against my own

* * * * *

For once in her life, Gertrude was obstinate, and it was when my father expected her to leave me, the next day, for London ; she was as firm, as either Frances or myself, and said, nothing should induce her to go ; so at the appointed hour, off went Sir Edmund, with the nurse, and the two little girls !

Gertrude and I were alone—alone in that large gloomy house, with its corridors and passages, and tapestried chambers ; but then it was spring, and the fields, and the lanes were fresh and green, and the sun shone down upon me, as if I had been the gayest of the gay !—I do not know anything that makes a sad mortal look in upon the darkness of her own heart, like the sunshine—the blessed sunshine !

Often and often, in the course of the day, I

have gone from the brilliancy of spring, and nature, into the solitude of my own room, and sunk on my knees with a heartfelt prayer, sent on high, for strength from the mercy-seat, to bear whatever trials it pleased that Higher Power to inflict, and a heartfelt spirit of entreaty, sent up for patience, and resignation, under the dispensation. I firmly believe, had it not been for these constant "kneelings at the footstool of God's throne," that I should never have been able to return to my appointed path in life, and say, with humble submission to the chastening hand, "It is well." As it was, I used to rise from my knees, calmed, consoled, and even enabled after a time, to think "whatever is, is for the best."

This was my first trial:—since then, I have knelt at death-beds, and kissed the last breath from the lips of the best beloved on earth—I have seen the grave close on the worshipped form, and I have been *left*—and yet I persist,

that however great be our portion of sorrow in this world—however bitter the cup that we have to drink—prayer is the soul's relief!—prayer is the balm to heal the broken heart.

No one who knows its inestimable blessing, can feel utterly and entirely bereft; for I know from experience, that where the tenderest voice of sympathy has failed to soothe, one hour to myself, with the world shut out, and every thought raised in trusting faith to heaven, has sufficed to bring the needed solace down; in short, I am convinced, that prayer, on *all* occasions, is just as much the support of our temporal, as it is the defence of our spiritual nature.

There was but *one* more distressing moment, during our last hours at Carrysfort, and it was, when Maule chose to come in, to wish us good bye, before we departed. Gertrude was in the room, with me, and was making tea; but I was sitting in the recess of a window, and I did not know of his being in the room, till he said to her,

“Where’s that poor girl?”

Good heavens! had I indeed lived to be pitied by *him*?

I instantly advanced, and was almost touched by the alteration in the man’s manner;—there was a subdued gruffness about it, which made me think he wished to appear more repulsive than usual, yet it had not that effect. He talked equally to both of us, and avoided every subject, that could affect us in any way, or remind me of the few last days. His chief anxiety seemed to be for the “Countess of Ellerslie,” as he studiously called her; and he knew all about the Dowager’s peculiarities, and how difficult it would be to live with her—in short, he knew *every thing*, as a matter of course, and I really began at last to believe, that there was nothing hidden, that he did *not* know.

As he stood in the centre of the room, with his diminutive person stiffly erect, except a slight stoop in his head, his shaggy hair, that had once

been brownish red, and his thick hanging grey eyebrows, I almost shuddered with disgust—I felt that ever to be at ease in his presence again, was utterly impossible—I was full of the sentiments of the Thekla of Coleridge's "Wallenstein:"

"You have beheld me in my agony!—

A most distressful accident occasioned

You, from a stranger, to become at once

My confidant!"

And from that instant, of course, all hope of friendship was at an end;—all hope of anything, save bare constrained civility, was out of the question. I would not have had that man my enemy, for a great deal; but I trembled at the only proof he had ever shown me, *as a friend!* The person who becomes accidentally your confidant—who worms an unwilling secret from you, must either be hated, or despised, or feared—I hated Maule Carrysfort.

CHAPTER VI.

AT the close of the autumn, Frances returned from her travels, in compliance with her husband's anxious wish, to spend the Christmas amongst his family, at Ellerslie. Frances whispered to me, with a sly laugh, when he gave this out, as his motive for leaving Paris, just as the gay season was coming on, that he was perfectly innocent of having any wish on the subject; it was his dear mama's doing; for the Dowager-Countess had made a point of his always being present at the winter distribution of blankets!

“ It speaks most highly for his filial character,

then," said I, gravely, when Frances ran on in the same vein of ridicule; "and I am sure, dear Frances, you would be the last not to acknowledge, that a good son makes a good husband."

"Oh! I know that," answered the young Countess, tossing back her head; "but I happened to wish particularly to spend the winter in Paris, and it was not very flattering to be thwarted; indeed I told Ellerslie directly, that I really thought his mother was dearer to him than I was, and he made no sort of reply—in that respect, he is a most excellent little boy, for he never argues!"

This was a curious strain for Frances to take up; and I sat and listened, with an inward feeling of self-satisfaction, at seeing my prophetic visions so completely verified;—and yet I should have been grieved, had I not, at the same time, observed how happy they appeared. The Dowager-Countess was already at Ellerslie,

waiting for them ; so they were alone in their new mansion, in Berkeley-square. It was not one of the largest houses ; but no expense had been spared in the arrangement of it, and I never saw anything to equal its exquisite luxury.

They seemed so united, too, which I own rather surprised us, for they were by no means congenial souls ; still they always breakfasted together, and never considered it absolutely necessary to send for a friend, if they were accidentally betrayed into a *tête-à-tête* dinner. The Earl had his cab, and the Countess her carriages, and one never interfered with the other ; in short, everything appeared *couleur de rose*.

An event occurred about this time, which annoyed my father considerably, and made us very unsettled in our plans. There was a dissolution of Parliament, and he lost his seat. The man who ousted him, was a Captain Ky-

naston, of the navy, a man opposed to my father in politics, who had no interest in the county equal to ours, but had been so ably assisted, that he won by a majority of two hundred, which was the "severest cut of all."

A circumstance came to my knowledge, soon after the election, which I would not name to my father, from a feeling of repugnance (for which I could hardly account), to injure Maule Carrysfort; but it came, by some means, to my father's ears, and made him quite furious. The person, whose exertions were most strenuous in supporting the rival candidate, and who had canvassed for him with most zeal, was Maule Carrysfort himself!—It was evidently an act of despicable revenge, for the slights which he always fancied my father was heaping on him; and no retort was ever half so successful, for it made Sir Edmund think he must have lost his popularity most completely, and consequently

gave him a disgust to the very name of Yorkshire, from north to south, and east to west. We were introduced to Captain Kynaston, at old Mrs. Hillier's, one night, when Gertrude and I were spending a quiet evening with her. He came in accidentally ; and instead of being satisfied with hearing that her health was in the same state that it had been in for the last hundred years, he stayed and stayed, till she asked him to tea, and stayed and stayed, till we went away ! He was a gay, lively, dashing young man, an accomplished rattle, and a sailor "every inch of him."

Prepossessed as we had been by circumstances *against* him, we were provoked to have no terms, but those of praise to use ; at the same time, we resolved to say nothing about the introduction, as the name of Kynaston, was a sore subject at home. We met him very often after this ; and felt more and more that his success might have been slightly owing

to his open, hearty, spirited manners, as well as to the unwearied exertions of his friends and Maule Carrysfort !

Nothing advances people so rapidly in each other's acquaintance, as the constant intercourse of a season at a watering-place. Whilst my father was actively engaged in canvassing for one of the western counties, vacant by a death, Gertrude, the two children, and I, were spending some months, at Broadstairs, under the surveillance of old Mrs. Hillier, who had the next house. The M.P.'s were all scattered, like bees out of a hive, about the country, but one was near *us*—Captain Kynaston was cruising up and down the coast, and his yacht at last came in sight of Broadstairs, and he landed.

The consequence was, we were all thrown constantly together ; and at last, even I, blind as I was, saw, that unless we went away, Gertrude would become Mrs. Kynaston, by mutual consent !

I went to Mrs. Hillier.

"Mrs. Hillier, what am I to do?—you see what is coming on, and I am sure I have neither the heart nor the power, to prevent it; but my father will be annoyed beyond expression!—do tell me what I am to do?"

"Let things take their course, my dear," said good, quiet, indolent Mrs. Hillier; "Captain Kynaston is very well off, and I do not see that Gertrude could do better, if she likes him."

"But, good heavens! my dear Mrs. Hillier," I exclaimed, "you must know that my father has a positive antipathy to the man!—do you not remember all those scenes at home, about the election and Maule Carrysfort, whose very name is enough to turn papa against anybody?"

"But, my dear, Mr. Carrysfort is not Captain Kynaston?" argued dear, dull, Mrs. Hillier.

"You make me quite frantic!" was my

answer ; “ shall I ever make you understand, that when my father hears the name of Kynaston, he thinks of his defeat, and his defeat carries him to the name of Maule, and that in continuation, leads him to think of all the most disagreeable, and even painful hours of his life ? ”

“ Oh, I see now !—well—I cannot advise, my dear, because if they like each other, it is too late to do any good, and if they do not, there is no occasion to worry yourself.”

To worry myself !—ye stars !—*here* was reasoning, for a person feeling herself in the responsible position, that I did ! and yet that good old soul, into whose deaf ear I had been screaming, for the last hour, advised me not to worry myself !—I saw the justice of one part of her remark, which was, that if they liked each other, it was too late to do any good. I hardly liked to say a word to Gertrude about it ; and yet it was almost necessary, before I took

her out of danger, to ascertain whether my fears had any foundation.

I am afraid, I was a deficient character, in point of worldly skill, and tact; for I had no more idea of attaining any knowledge, except by straightforward questions, than the man in the moon—what would I have given, then, for the incomparable talent of manœuvring, which Frances possessed! or the gentle, steady, cautious, perseverance and patience of Gertrude. But no, precipitate I always was, and precipitate I knew I always should be, so I chose our walking home, when side by side our bonnets hid our faces, to begin—

“I do not see the yacht to-day, Gertrude.”

“Oh, I see it!—in the bright horizon, almost—”

“Rather odd you should know it so far off, Gertrude, from any other ship—I never knew a yacht from a ship in my life.”

“I knew it was going in that direction,”

said Gertrude, in the lowest possible voice, and I could not think what to say next. I did not see her face, for she turned it quite away ; and all I could judge by, was the deep crimson of her usually white wrist, seen between her glove and the cuff of her sleeve. That, though, was poor satisfaction, for she was *such a blusher*, that had Captain Kynaston's attentions been to me, or little Rose, she would have turned just the same colour. In such a dilemma, I made a bold stroke.

“Do you know, dear Gertrude, I am afraid that papa will be displeased, when he returns, to find that we have become so intimate with his successful opponent?”

“I do not see why,” said Gertrude, in the same quiet, low voice ; “we were nearly as intimate all the winter, and all the spring, and he never objected, as far as I can remember.”

“He never liked him,” I answered. She was quite silent, and we sat down on the beach

without another word. This was not to be endured ; so I suddenly addressed her.

“Gertrude ! be candid with me !—treat me as a sister, my dearest, and do not keep me in this uncertainty !—you have had thousands of opportunities of seeing Captain Kynaston in town, when I have never been present, therefore I can know but little of what went on ; but *if* you love me, dearest, tell me, even in confidence,—*is* there anything between you and him ?”

Gertrude turned her beautiful face full upon me—there was doubt in its expression, mingled with an evident wish to speak.—

“Trust me !” I continued. “I will not betray you !”

“Then there *is*,” was the laconic reply. I was dumb with surprise and sorrow, for I could foresee nothing but disappointment in store for them, and God knows I had suffered too poignantly in that way myself, to bear the

thought of seeing my sister placed in a situation of similar anguish.

“ Well ?” asked Gertrude, with a vain endeavour to hide a smile, “ are you horrified—shocked ?”

“ No, Gertrude—but grieved !”

“ And why grieved ?”

“ Can you not guess ?—how will papa receive such news ? Have you ever thought of that ?”

“ Yes, often—and I know him so well, that I am certain, if he gains this election, and returns triumphant over Maule Carrysfort, who declared he would never succeed, Harry Kynaston and I shall have nothing to fear—if, on the contrary, he fails Ah ! I have never thought of the possibility Why should we think of failure, dear Ada ?—Harry Kynaston has often told me, he never yet failed in any single object on which he had set his heart !—why should he begin now ?”

This was the reasoning of a person in love—almost as provoking as Mrs. Hillier's.

“Then you consider yourself engaged to Captain Kynaston, Gertrude?”

“Yes, conditionally—”

“And clandestinely—oh, my dearest, can he ever respect you for this?”

“Ada, he only spoke plainly yesterday!—whilst you were at Mrs. Hillier's! and I said I should tell you immediately, to which he made no sort of objection, of course—I meant to have the credit of beginning myself, but you were so abrupt, my own Ada!”

I confess I was piqued—not at her happiness—my heart bounded at that, for, if no obstacles arose, this was just the sort of match I approved—she was nineteen, and he eight years older—no brothers or sisters, or mother-in-law, to vex her gentle spirit—esteem and affection on her side, and the gift of a gallant, upright heart on his—a man respected in his public career, and

worshipped in his profession . . . what more could she win ?

I was not piqued at all this, of course, but at not having been told before the lapse of a *whole day*, and at not having found it out before. —Captain Kynaston was gone on an excursion to the South Foreland, as an excuse to be out of the way, I suspect, as there was nothing very tempting that way ; at all events he was gone for two or three days, and by the time he came back, we should have heard of the result of the election, and my father might probably have returned. In all this constant whirl of excitement, surely no one can wonder, that except in the sleepless hours of the night, I had no time to dwell on the desolation of my own heart. It would have been as impossible as it was vain.—As we had expected, my father returned a few hours before the “Seraph” anchored off Broadstairs, and Captain Kynaston came on

shore in the evening, and had an interview with Sir Edmund.

My father had been triumphant, and he was in the best possible spirits, and temper; so when I was sent for to speak to him, I went with a very tranquil step, passing Captain Kynaston on the stairs.

“I have sent for you, Ada,” said my father, using the abbreviation of my name, which was a sign all was right, “because I want to know if that child, Gertrude, is quite decided, as to her feelings with regard to Captain Kynaston?—The time seems to me but short, which she has had to choose a partner for life, and you know I never liked him much; but, however, ... well?”

“I think, papa, Gertrude has quite made up her mind—would you like to ask her yourself?”

“No, thank you!—I shall have a scene of some kind, and that is the reason I sent for you;

—I cannot stand Gertrude's tears, and smiles, and piteous looks, and colourings—but it really appears to me so strange, that she should fancy that boisterous fellow Kynaston, that I thought he might just have deceived himself—that is all—you may go."

I saw nothing strange in it! Papa saw nothing strange in the marriage of Frances with that goose, begging his pardon, Lord Ellerslie; therefore, what there could be wonderful, in the attachment of two people so perfectly suited to each other, as Gertrude, and the amiable, honest, handsome, Harry Kynaston, I could not imagine.

"Congratulate me!" murmured Gertrude, winding her arms round my neck; "all have done so but you!"

"Bless you! Heaven bless you, my own—!" was all I had to say—I saw they would be happy—it was impossible it could be otherwise; and as I stood hour after hour at the window, and

watched them on the beach, I indulged in the same train of thoughts which filled my mind when Frances was going to be married ; yet *here* I had no fault to find !—Mrs. Hillier said, I had too old a head for my young shoulders—perhaps so—grief, and grief *concealed*, had aged me—but certain it was, I used to watch those two happy beings, with strangely venerable feelings of affection !—Gertrude was such a loveable creature !

“ She was not one of many words and vows,
And breathings of her love, and eager shows
Of warm affection :—in her quiet eye,
There dwelt *deep confidence* in what she loved,
And nothing more.——”

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER Gertrude's engagement to Captain Kynaston, he took up so much of her time, that I became my father's secretary in her place. He had never been accustomed to write his own letters, and he would not take the trouble—he used to sit opposite to me, with his eyes shut, and dictate for hours, whilst Gertrude was on the water, with poor Mrs. Hillier, who had been told the sea-air was good for her, and persisted in chaperoning them in the “Seraph,” in spite of being a miserable sailor. Gertrude's health was very delicate, too, and Captain Kynaston fancied the motion of

the vessel brought a brighter tint into her fair, transparent cheeks ; so they were out from morning till night, and sometimes they went on shore at Ramsgate Pier, and drove home . . . At all events, I became, by this means, my father's constant companion, and was for ever at his desk. One circumstance used to *sting* me, whenever I had to write a "business letter" for him, and that was, his always prefacing the commencement of it by the words,

"Remember, Adelaide, whatever you write for me, must be considered as *sacred*."

This speech used to cut like a two-edged sword ; for, in the first place, it shewed he doubted my conscientiousness, and in the next it reminded me of what had first made him doubt me . . . of Maule Carrysfort's having become so unaccountably possessed of the contents of "*that letter*," and of to whom that letter was addressed, too ! It was agony to have my thoughts flung back upon those vanished

days!... But I must proceed, for it is not for me to dwell too much upon myself, upon those bygone feelings another breath for strength, and I will go on

A copy of an old letter, written two years before, was missing from my father's desk; and as it was of some consequence, it annoyed him—we hunted in every possible place, but it was not to be found; I then said I could only think of one place, where it might have “hidden itself,” as the expression is—

“And that, papa, is in Gertrude's portfolio—the large one, with white blotting-paper, which used to stand on the library-table, in Richmond Gardens.” Gertrude was “at sea,” as usual, and I did not like to open it myself, because I knew it was full of scraps of poetry, and notes, which Captain Kynaston used to send her, if he went to Deal or Dover for a day. We had, therefore, to wait till she came in, and then we went together, to look through its pages.

Leaf after leaf we turned over ; and at last my eye was arrested by a sight which sent the blood in torrents to my heart. There was one page which seemed a mass of blots ; but in turning it, I saw that the ink had sunk through the white blotting-paper, and any one might have read, as clear and easily as I did, the fair impression of the letter, which had caused so much unhappiness and distress to me at the time, and often since !

In Gertrude's bold, strong hand, were the following words, which had been apparently blotted off in the greatest haste :

“ Sir Edmund Carrysfort's compliments to Colonel Denison, and requests that he will do him the favour to appoint an hour, when he can see Colonel Denison respecting the sale, &c., of his property of ‘ The Holme.’ ”

I do not say that these lines were entirely distinct, as far as words went ; but they were plain enough for any one less prying than Maule

Carrysfort; and to *my* eyes! oh, how plain they were! I could not speak, but I felt as if I could gasp with joy and relief! I grasped Gertrude's arm, pointed out every word, tore the sheet violently out, and flew to my father!

"My dear Ada," were his first words, after a long pause and reverie, during which he had been reading and re-reading it, and I had been standing with my hands clasped, breathlessly awaiting some remark: "I beg your pardon most sincerely; and I only hope, in justice to yourself, that you will let me write to Maule Carrysfort, and upbraid him for having so basely allowed you to be under this suspicion, for two years!"

"Heaven forbid!" I exclaimed, energetically; "let him rest—no word of mine must ever reach that man—I am cleared; so here let it drop."

No—that creature was sacred in my eyes,—I could not have allowed any soul to injure or

wound him ; whilst I had power to protect, he was sacred, from the circumstances with which chance had associated him.

It was with pain and anxiety that I now began to notice the increasing delicacy of Gertrude's health ; and though our medical man smiled at the anxiety, he acknowledged that the winter at Malta would be of the greatest service—he was sure it would rëestablish her ; and Captain Kynaston implored my father to allow him to take them in the “ Seraph.”

I remember well with what a chill I listened to their arrangements !—I knew I could not be included in them, for I should be obliged to stay to take care of the children, and be ready to receive my father on his return, when Parliament met, after he had left my own Gertrude, with some friends of his, at Malta. I was to spend the Christmas with Frances at Ellerslie, whilst Rose and Carry went to old Mrs. Hillier ;—altogether, I was to drag myself about, with

my desolate heart, till the month of March, and it was now November !

The day of parting came—that dreadful day ; —how gladly would I have put the bitter cup aside, had I not felt that anything, anything was better than the selfish cowardice of shunning it ; so I strained her once, and once again, in my arms, and saw her go on board ; and I stood at the head of the Ramsgate pier, to watch her standing on the deck, leaning on proud, happy-looking Harry Kynaston, whose brow and lip of mirth, were tinged *for once* with sadness, when he saw her tears—yes, there I stood, till Mrs. Hillier began breaking in on my “luxury of regret,” and telling me she felt shivery !

“Shivery !”—Good Heaven !—to talk of being “shivery,” with the yacht and its precious freight in sight !

“Take the dear children home, then, dear madam, for I cannot stir just yet !”

"Oh, my dear, it would not be correct for you to be here, all alone, amongst the sailors, and people; and when the tide comes in, we cannot get home by the sands."

"*It would not be correct !*"—as if I thought of the forms of the world at such a moment !

"*I cannot stir !*" I repeated, passionately ; so there I stayed, till a sea-fog obscured the surface of the bright waters—there I stood, flinging away the tears, as they kept gathering in my eyes, and Mrs. Hillier sat in the light-house, at the pier-head, "*because she felt shivery !*"

Well—people are differently formed by nature, that is very certain !

Oh, these earth's partings ! how long and how weary they make life seem !—well may the poetess call them,

"Passionate partings, such as wring the heart
Till tears are life-blood !"

It was the anguish of thinking that it was

just possible I might never see her again, which made that parting so wretched. It was the value of the treasure I had in her, that made me fancy I should not keep it—and yet, she was hardly mine now!—she was heart and soul another's—her hopes all fixed on him—her very existence centred in his!

Then there was another parting, from those darling children, who did not at all like my leaving them; because Carry declared she never could make Mrs. Hillier hear; and Rose, who thought it fine amusement to shout in her ear, was always being reprov'd, for pitching her voice so high, that it grated on the old lady's nerves.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN I reached Ellerslie, the house did not answer my expectations. I had pictured to myself, one of the "lordly homes of England," instead of which, I found it damp, low, and dull. It was a spacious mansion ; and at the time that I happened to be there, it was full of guests, so there was no want of gaiety indoors ; but I was disappointed in the position—it was situated in the ugliest part of Lancashire, if beautiful Lancashire can have any ugly part about it. Frances was as "dashing," as Hugh Daubigny used to call her, and as buoyant as

ever, and abused me for my sobriety—she was not one to enter into feelings like mine—she judged by externals; the moment she saw I had given up my ringlets, and wore plain hair, she exclaimed,

“Wear a wig, my dear soul, or anything you please, only do not give up ringlets at twenty! For mercy’s sake, curl your hair, or people will begin to talk!”

I have often smiled since, to think of that expression, so terrific to the ears of a worldling. “*People will begin to talk!*” And I have smiled in utter carelessness—smiled even when she fluttered away in her satin and opals, and diamonds, and left me in my white crape! She was a dazzling creature; but as I followed her with my eyes, I often thought,

“Thy path is not as mine—where thou art blest

My spirit would but wither : mine own grief

Is in mine eyes, a richer, holier thing

Than all thy happiness!”

And I thought this, because I was not quite sure that she enjoyed what I called happiness.

There was an immense party of Ellerslies in the house. Four of the daughters had married commoners, and one a gouty Baron—then there was one unmarried, Lady Ellen Crewe. Before I had been a week in the castle, I was thoroughly wearied out with hearing the Dowager, telling all the sayings of “my daughter Seyton’s girls,” and “my daughter Huntley’s boys,” besides quoting the several opinions, of “my daughters Morton, Lane and Gordon,” in opposition to those of “my son Ellerslie’s wife, who was the eldest Carrysfort.”

Frances sat at the head of the table always ; but as it was broad enough to admit of two, the Dowager Countess had a seat at her left hand.

“It is most provoking,” exclaimed Frances, to me ; “for the old woman deliberately stamps the feet of her chair, on my velvet dresses. I have had two skirts with trains entirely

ruined!—then she crushes my sleeves, and goes to sleep after the wine has been once round, making me her arm-chair!—you can't think how I long sometimes to exclaim, as the gods do at the dear old pantomines, 'Turn her out!' for she is quite superannuated; and yet Ellerslie will not hear of her being put at the side of the table!"

"He seems a most exemplary son," I replied, not knowing what else to say; "you really should do him justice."

"No, my dear, I can't, because I think it is the force of habit—he is the *goodest* little boy that ever was, as his nurse says; but I would give the universe to be able to unpin him from his mamma's apron!—But now tell me about Gertrude—she is actually going to marry a sailor, poor child, is she not?—how in the world did it happen?—is she very far gone? I need hardly ask, though, for she is just the sort of

girl to marry for love—has he anything in the world besides his heart?”

I explained that Captain Kynaston had fair prospects besides his profession.

“Profession!” repeated Frances; “I am not sure that I like that word. I think I like a man without a profession.”

“I always understood, Lord Ellerslie was in the army,” said I, with a smile.

“Oh yes, but you know he is only in the guards!—they are too handsome, in general, to be of much use! They look much too well in a drawing-room, to be sent on service: and surely, Gertrude wrote me some dreadful story of Captain Kynaston being wounded at Algiers?”

It was impossible to help being amused, at the way in which Frances ran on: she seemed to look down so completely, on anything under a coronet, and to have so sovereign a contempt, for any one who answered, “In the army, the navy, the law, or the church,” instead of “*Je m’amuse !*”

I had opportunities of observing, that the Countess Dowager, was a most provoking old woman; and which the many hints which Maule Carrysfort had thrown out, were not without foundation. From having lived a great deal in the country, she used to interfere in things that Frances knew nothing about. My sister, in the routine of a town life, had tasted cream from the chased silver, of a tea service, amused herself with making her spoon stand upright in it, at Carrysfort; had even suspicions, that chalk was put into it in London, to give it a *country appearance*; but beyond this, she knew nothing; and therefore she was exceedingly annoyed one morning, when the Dowager, before twenty people, began declaring that the cream was “*nothing like what it used to be* in her time,” and added,

“I really think, Lady Ellerslie, the next time you go into the dairy—”

“I!” ejaculated Frances, turning crimson;

“I do not consider such a pilgrimage at all in *my way*—if the cream is bad—”

“Not bad,” interrupted the Dowager, “Ellersie cream was never bad—only thinner than it used to be ‘*in my time.*’”

“Ha! my fault! all my fault!” said Frances, with a look of whimsical contrition; but in spite of the able way in which she carried it off, everyone must have seen she *felt* it.

This was only one of the series of petty annoyances, the gnat-stings to which my sister was subjected; and as we were both endued with the same fiery Carrysfort spirit, I am sure her temper must have smarted, as often as mine did, when I constantly observed the old Countess, take the lead in the “mechanism” of the Castle, and then say, with a humble croaking laugh, that she “always forgot herself, for really Lady Ellerslie was never at hand.” There was one thing especially, which made us both turn deep red, one day at dinner. A number of

county people were collected in the drawing-rooms, and Frances entered rather late, dressed in a velvet, the *berthe* of which was fastened in front, by a large *sevigné* of superb diamonds, which continued "small by degrees" to the length of the stomacher. Added to this, she had ear-rings and a chain, from her forehead to the back of her head, of the same. She looked a blaze of jewels ; but no sooner was she seated at table, than the Dowager bent forward, and said, in what she meant to be a whisper, but which I, a distance of three people off, heard distinctly,

"Are those the Ellerslie diamonds?"

"They are," was the haughty answer.

"Dear me !" said the Dowager, smoothing her gloves down, with the air of a resigned martyr ; "how London jewellers *do* metamorphose ! I declare I should never have known them again !"

At this slight on the faultless setting of Storr

and Mortimer, Frances looked at me, and blushed with anger; but recovered the next moment, sufficiently to say,

“Then your Ladyship wore them in their *original country setting!*”

Perhaps the retort was bad taste, but the old woman deserved it, and Frances was not of a temper to stand upon ceremony in such a case. Lady Ellerslie coloured through her rouge, and burnt herself with the hot soup, which Frances insisted, when we were alone,—“served her right!” In short, the Dowager spared nothing,—from the Ellerslie diamonds, down to the Ellerslie cream.

CHAPTER IX.

“WELL, Mrs. Hillier,” said I, when I was once more at home, and entertaining the old lady at tea; “the more I see of Frances and her *ménage*, the more I wonder how she can endure it.—She was very wild and mirthful, as usual, but I am convinced the gaiety was assumed.—I never had an opportunity of looking behind the curtain, except for hurried moments, when she was in the nursery, and then she was so anxious to make the baby crow for my amusement, that I could ask her no questions.”

“Frances married for rank, my dear,” an-

swered Mrs. Hillier ; “she ought to be satisfied, for I suppose she did not bargain for happiness.”

“ But it is no fault of the Earl’s, Mrs. Hillier ; he is the most easily-led simpleton, that ever walked through life—it is the Dowager, and all those sisters ! I only wish you could have seen them with that unhappy baby of Frances’s ! I call it unhappy, for it was a delicate, fragile child ; and whenever it was ailing, and driving poor Frances nearly distracted with its plaintive cries, there was ‘my daughter Morton,’ rocking it on her knee, because she happened to have the youngest child in the family, whilst ‘my daughter Seyton, and my daughter Huntley,’ were prescribing and administering all the remedies that had been given to their innumerable troop of infantry, from a month old, upwards !”

This was no exaggerated description, for Fran-

ces herself used constantly to say to me, with excusable petulance,

"I declare my *very baby* is not my own!—and yet I am obliged to appear grateful, for having the care of it taken off my hands!"

One day, as Mrs. Hillier and I were sitting, conversing on these sort of topics, little Rose, who had been romping about the room, suddenly came to my side, and laying her head of sunny curls in my lap, whilst she looked up in my face, said,

"I *must* tell you *somesing*, Ada!"

"Tell me then, love—what is it?"

"Somesing that happened a long time ago—when you were away, Ada."

"Well, love?"

"But Mrs. Hillier mustn't hear—she must hold her ears."

I laughed in spite of myself, for I knew there was little necessity for that, whilst Rose spoke in those gentle whispers.

"She must hold her ears," persisted Rose, in a tone of command; "for she told me not to tell."

Mrs. Hillier was quite sharp enough to hear *this*, at all events, and she looked up quickly, and said, "Rose!—Rose!" in a voice of warning.

"But *he* told me I might tell!" screamed Rose; "so I will!"

"I've lost one of my meshes," said the old lady, hunting about the carpet, and then rising; "I must go to your room, Adelaide, my dear, for I think I remember dropping it there:" and away she hobbled.

"Now Rose, be quick, love," I exclaimed, "and don't scream quite so loud."

"You won't be angry, and call me naughty?"

"No, dear—only go on."

"Then I'll tell!—Carry and I were running our hoops in the Park, just after you went, and somebody stopped us, and spoke to me, Ada, and told me I was to tell you, and papa, and

Gertrude, he was going away, a long, long way, for a long, long time; and I was to wish you goodbye, Ada, and to tell you, I was very like you—and then he kissed Carry, and then me, such a many, many times.”

“Rose, my child,” I murmured, as I bent to the stifling embrace of her little arms, and buried my face in her soft fat neck; “who was this somebody?”

“Guess, guess!” cried the child, with thoughtless glee, delighted to think she had *puzzled me*! But I could not guess—I could not *speak*—I could not say one word, to save my life!

“*Shall* I tell you, Ada? It was Colonel Denison!—now am I naughty? Mrs. Hillier said, it would be naughty to tell you—are you angry, Ada?—Mrs. Hillier said you would be!”

“Angry?—no, sweet love!—look up, my child—look at me, Rose!” And I raised the child’s sweet face, and parted her bright, wavy hair, to gaze on her features, with a long deep sigh.

“ And my Carry ?” I exclaimed, rousing myself ; “ has she nothing to tell me ?—what did *she* get ?”

“ Only one kiss,” answered quiet Carry, “ but he gave me a rose, and I’ve got it now ;” and she flew to a tiny red trunk, which held all her worldly goods, consisting of spangles, sugar-plums, a miniature set of tea-things, and a number of the eyes of departed dolls, and brought out her hoarded treasure, the withered rose !

There was a touch of sentiment in this trifling action, of which many an older person has been guilty, and as I held it in my hand, a flood of thoughts and feelings filled my heart—

“ Oh ! ’tis the *heart* that magnifies this life,
Making a truth and beauty of its own !”

I asked the child, if I should take care of it for her, if she prized it so.

"I'll give it you, Ada," was her gentle answer, "all for yourself, for ever, because I kept it for you."

At that moment it was difficult to know which to love most of those two little sisters, but I am afraid I worshipped my turbulent Rose—she was the link, from that time, which bound me to a chain of deathless memories.

A few days after this, I received a letter, addressed by Maule Carrysfort—I was almost afraid to touch it, much more to open it, for he had never written a line to me the last two years, and the sight of the crooked and crabbed letters, made me exclaim to myself, "What can that 'bird of ill-omen' want with me?" But the same shrinking fear, that made me hesitate to open it, also drove me on, as if in desperation, to brave whatever he might have to communicate.

It was a strange effusion—quite in his own quaint style, dropping the personal pronoun

wherever it could be dispensed with, and mixing up his information in the most confusing manner.—There was but one paragraph over which I strained my eyes, till the very letters seemed to melt away under the intensity of my gaze—it was this:—

..... “Taken leave of an old friend since Christmas—Colonel Denison—going to America, Bogota, think it was—got a situation there, what you fine people call a ‘place,’—don’t know what it is, for never asked.”

There were many questions about Frances, and condolences on her child’s having been a girl, which from any one else would have been impertinent, but from him, were simply amusing, or beneath notice.—I answered the letter as briefly as possibly, and then he was forgotten again.

CHAPTER X.

It was now about the time the Daubignys usually came to town; and it was a source of the greatest amusement to me, to watch the indefatigable manœuvres of Lady Grace, for what she considered “the good of her family!”—The manœuvre which gave her most trouble at this period, was one to throw Hugh, the hopeful “Lancer,” at the feet of the golden pillar, on which Miss Meredith stood exalted.—I was intimate with Miss Meredith, so I saw both sides of the game, and I perceived that either she must have been misled by the repre-

sentations of *his* family, and *her* friends, or else Hugh must have behaved shamefully.

Hugh Daubigny was one of those animals, called male flirts ; and from his manners, appearance, and prospects, he was one of the most dangerous of the order.—His plan was to fix on the girl who was most admired in his set—the star who shone brightest, who had the largest circle of satellites—he would completely win her from that circle, make her the object of constant remark during the season, keep her within a charmed ring, into which he suffered no other to intrude ; and then he would suddenly discover, that “*le jeu*,” was not worth “*la chandelle*,” and be off in some other direction, to “start fair,” as he called it, for some newer object. As I was in their set, I had the power of making observations on all the flowers by which the “*papillon volage*” fluttered ; and certainly it appeared to me, that most of them received his attentions seriously, and took “Gre-

gory's advice to his daughters," *au pied de la lettre* :—"There is a case where a woman may coquet justifiably, to the utmost verge which her conscience will allow.—It is where a gentleman purposely declines to make his addresses, till such time as he thinks himself perfectly sure of her consent."—(p. 74 and 75.) Now it seemed that these particular young ladies, evidently thought he was "purposely declining to make his addresses," and, therefore, it was their duty, to make him "perfectly sure of their consent."

There is no writer in the world, no author, however faultless, who is not liable to perversions of his text and maxims ; and I cannot think that the amiable and pious Gregory, with his strict ideas of feminine delicacy and decorum, could ever have meant, in those few lines, to uphold or sanction the system of "setting," which is only increasing in strength and popu-

larity, as seasons in their giddy round return.— Hugh was certainly very much to blame ; but I must do him the justice to say, the encouragement he met with, sanctioned almost all his advances. He was so heedless, so utterly thoughtless and careless of what he said, or did, that I have often been thunderstruck at his having escaped being called to account. He had his indolent good temper to thank partly ; and partly his large blue eyes, which he used to open with the most vacant expression of amazement, when accused of being “ particular,” and exclaimed with a languid elegance, contrasting strangely with his favourite phrase, “ My dear fellow, you don’t mean *that*?—it’s all humbug !”

Humbug !—that strange word—that expressive term, which conveys to the feelings, the pleasant and agreeable sensation, of being cheated, deceived, misled, hoaxed, quizzed, and sold !!—Such was the explanation I received,

when I requested my cousin Hugh to tell me the meaning of the word "humbug."

The moment I saw Hugh and Miss Meredith together, I discovered that there was "something going on," as the saying is. There was an air in her manner of receiving the commonest attentions, which he was forced to offer, that convinced me she fancied he was sincere ; whilst I was equally certain, that the first vacant chair by my side, would receive his weight, flung into it with petulant weariness, and that my ear would instantly hear the accustomed groan of — "There, Ada ! that's over !—I've mounted guard a whole hour, I'm sure, and I'll be hanged if I do it again — it's such regular thorough-bred humbug."

She did not set at him as the rest did, because she was fully aware of the advantages of the connexion *for him*, but she also saw that he was a person very welcome to win her if he chose ; and as, to all appearances, he had chosen to try, she

was prepared to breathe the inaudible affirmative, when the tremulous question was hazarded ! I never knew a girl who so quietly received homage, as the one in question — she took it as a right; and it was *that* which made her blind to the reluctant attentions of my cousin Hugh Daubigny. She had no brothers, no male relations, excepting her father — *he* was always at his bank, and her mother perfectly indifferent, as to who worshipped at her daughter's shrine, provided they were eligibles ; so Hugh, in the days of his flirtation with her, had run tame in and out of the house, very sure no one would enquire into the motives of such temporary devotion, and therefore ceased as suddenly as he commenced, having simply and solely won her heart.

The only person who ever treated this gallant, gay, and fascinating Captain Daubigny as he deserved, and repaid him in his own coin, was Regina Spencer—the Spencers' only child—the

worshipped, the cold, the heartless, the beautiful daughter of our oldest friends.

She was one of the most imperial-looking creatures I ever saw ; and though the world called her cold and heartless, *I* knew she was as impassioned as ever woman could be ! Before she saw her twenty-second summer, she had thrown offer after offer aside, till Hugh entered the lists; and then “a change came o’er the spirit of her dream ;” she softened, warmed, *nearly* learnt to lean upon that shallow heart !—*not quite*, though, for the time came, when Hugh left her too, and then she made the *coup d’état* !

She published far and wide, with a half averted eye, and a laughing lip, in spite of opinion, and in defiance of the truth, *that she had refused him* ! She met him in society, and she received him at home, but the same principle extended itself over her manner,—it was a sort of kind, pitying, courteous, yet dignified, and

calm reserve—an air of half-smiling derision when he was named, and yet an indescribable simper of satisfaction mingled with it. It was incomparably acted, and universally believed. Hugh came to me as soon as the report reached him, and I was alone—he was in a towering passion, which accounts for his language.

“Ada, it’s a lie!—on my word it’s the most barefaced lie that ever fell from a woman’s lips!—I flirted, I own—just flirted with her; but as to proposing, and as to being refused! . . . I give you my most solemn word of honour, it is as perfect a lie as”

“Hugh, Hugh, for shame!” I interposed; “you really forget yourself!—your simple word is quite enough for me; but, upon my honour, I think you are rightly punished, for the world will never believe your angry asseverations, against her quiet evidence!”

“Won’t it?—then I’ll make it!—do you think I am going to be made the laughing-stock

of the set, by that girl?—not I!—I'll deny it to her face!—I'll confront her—I'll contradict the scandalous falsehood right and left, and shame her for the libel, too!”

“Never!” said I, laughing; “you can do nothing, Hugh, but bear it. Regina Spencer has behaved most politically, though I do not wish to support her in her falsehood. I only say that she has taken up the cudgels with a masterly hand, and you must submit.”

“Submit?—not I!”—cried Hugh; “do you think I am going to knock under, and be added to the regiment of Regina Spencer's rejected?—not I!—I, who was never refused in my . . . I . . . I mean . . . I . . .”

“*Basta così!*” was my laughing interruption; “you may say that to any one but me!”

“Ah! Ada, I don't mind being *your* rejected;—I pride myself on the bare fact of loving you, hopeless as I am of any return. I may be ashamed of Regina's shameful accusation, but not of *that!*”

“ Well—all I advise you, is this,” I answered: “ let the falsehood die a natural death—consider the position in which you placed this girl, and then ask your conscience, if you do not admire, although you may condemn, the perfect method to which she resorted to extricate herself.—You followed her till you made others retire; and when you relaxed, she still found those others would not return—the reason was evident to a much less accomplished woman of the world, than Regina Spencer!—They thought she was engaged to you!—the consequence was, that she made a desperate stroke, gave out right and left that she had refused you, and if you choose any Wednesday night to go to Mrs. Spencer’s ‘*réception*,’ you will see that elegant creature with as numerous a throng around her, as she commanded two years ago!—*Voilà!* I think papa himself could not have made a better speech!”

“ But,” began Hugh, after tearing a branch

of lilac all to pieces, "am I to allow that she has refused me, without one attempt to expose her?"

"You would never expose her—Regina is not a girl to seize on an expedient that *would* have been doubted, or that *could* have been disbelieved—no man ever yet frankly acknowledged himself a 'rejected;' so your most earnest denial would only entail ridicule—let it rest, Hugh!—let it rest, and enjoy the joke!—carry it off, if you have any respect for yourself, and do not let them say that you are wearing the willow!"

"She shall not have *that* triumph," exclaimed the still foaming young Captain; "but I wish I could pay her off. I've a great mind to hatch some falsehood, and"

"Don't," said I, laughing heartily, "for you can never beat hers!"

And there ended our amusing, and energetic conversation; often since have I thought

to myself, what an admirable lesson it was to him, and all his fraternity, if they could only be aware of the ridicule such an affair draws down on them, amongst the female army of their set, headed by such a general as Regina Spencer!

CHAPTER XI.

REGINA SPENCER was one of the *belles* of our set—she had been brought up in France, and prided herself on having been born in Italy. Be that as it might, she was a creature who, like the aloe, is only seen once in a century. She was a kind, and sincere friend—an impassioned and eccentric character, and a finished woman of the world.—In personal appearance, she was a dream of beauty!—I have never yet described the loveliness of those, who clustered round me in my younger days; but Regina Spencer must not be passed over. She was not above the middle height—and yet, amongst

ourselves, she was always called, "The General;" but her figure was shadowy to a fault, and just escaped being thought too slight, by its sculptured roundness; then her face, that Grecian face, with its skin so transparent, and so pale, that the faintest tinge of colour would have marred its purity;—how often I have gazed on it, and wondered what gave it that holy look, when I knew what a tempest of worldly passion was brooding in the troubled depths beneath: her eyes were as nearly black as they could be, without losing the ray of bright brown light; and on those colourless cheeks, the lashes swept both from the upper and the lower lid, with a darkness that seemed to throw a shadow of its own. Added to these, were her deeply tinted lips; her jet-black, glossy hair; and last, not least, her merry, child-like, joyous heart!

Alone with us, she was like a bird; but in the world, she was the stately, frigid being, who

had warmed to life under one sun only, and that was the ray shed from the fickle heart of Hugh Daubigny.

I could not help saying to Hugh one day, when we had been speaking of her: "Do not flatter yourself, you have trifled with that girl's affections—it strikes me she is above being trifled with—you may bend, but you can never entirely, bow or break such a heart, such a *lion-heart* at that!"

And to see the air with which she now greeted him, the way she bent, almost to a curtsy, with mock humility, when he asked her to dance, and raised her gorgeous fan, whilst her beautiful teeth flashed in the exuberance of arch and malicious mirth, behind it,—one would have thought he had never made the slightest impression on her!

Oh! that girl was a peerless creature, but she was too worldly—every movement was art—every action studied—every grace was

taught,—every word weighed—and habit had at last become such a second nature, that it was no more trouble to her to act her part, towards Hugh Daubigny, than it would have been for my own little Carry or Rose, to be natural.

“Tell me,” said she, one day to me, in the midst of an *eclât de rire*, “what does our ‘*Papillon volage*’ say, to the character I have spread about for him?—Who is the highest in his scale just now? Is it little Meredith?—because, if so, he had much better pick up her devoted little heart, and sober down into a married man. I hear he is ready to call me out, but I think my retort was most courteous! But seriously, do tell me, is little Meredith to catch our ‘*preux chevalier*?’”

“You are too severe on my cousin,” was my reply.

“Oh, Ada, don’t lay such a stress on the word *cousin*!—you surely cannot mean that you are

going to take his part, on the score of his relationship?—impossible!”

“No,” said I, angrily, “but I think, Regina, you have acted a most unfeminine part throughout this transaction, and you know, I always say what I think; so you may be offended or not, as you please.”

“No—I shall not be offended, because it is not convenient; but I advise you, my dear girl, not to get into the habit of saying what you think, for nothing is so awful, as a person who tells plain truths!—those excruciating plain truths, which you only hear in family parties, or amongst old maids!”

“I like truth,” said I, seriously; “I consider it the essence of purity.”

“*Ahi! misericordia!*” laughed Regina; “what a curious term! I am growing so nervous, Ada, (for that was a side cut at me,) that I must go—only remember, the next time you see Hugh, *my love to him!*”

This was not amiable, to say the least of it ; and my remonstrances on the manner in which she kept up “ the joke,” as she called it, grew more and more frequent ; but she knew too well her “ vantage ground,” to give up, before she had persecuted Hugh to the utmost ; and yet so artfully did she manage, that it was impossible to find room, to say, that she was acting from pique. My father admired this girl most enthusiastically, and used to be delighted at the atmosphere of mirth, which she seemed to bring into every house with her. The tale of her imagined refusal of Hugh Daubigny, reached him at last, and he said she had done wisely in refusing to march with a regiment, all the days of her life. I believe, the tale had lost its *zest*, before the Daubignys could have heard it ; and it was fortunate that they never did, or I am convinced, Lady Grace would have found means to revenge herself, even on our terrific, and invulnerable General !

But to return to little Meredith.

She at last began to awake from her comfortable trance of self-deception, and to see that Hugh felt her fetters, light as they were, very irksome; and for some time, she did not appear to know what to do. She seemed to have received such a shock, that she tottered under the violence of it. The girl moped, hid herself, and at last grew ill. She looked completely wretched; and one morning she called to tell me, that she was ordered abroad for her health!

I could say nothing, of course, either to her or Hugh; but Regina Spencer considered it a continuation of the joke, and made no secret of her delight, at the failure of my Aunt Daubigny's plans. She knew nothing of Miss Meredith, but she never professed to like her—she took great interest in her, and watched her actions, and the progress or decline of the affair, with intense, and minute anxiety; but she was above the mock generosity, of pretending to

like her,—she was her rival; and deep as a girl's interest may be, and *invariably is*, in her rival, she can never sincerely like her; so Regina never dreamt of pretending to do so.

“I dislike her,” said she to me; “but I do not wish her to die exactly. I only wish something would happen, to startle Captain Daubigny, and stop him in his career. It has blown over *me*, because you see we know such a tribe of young men, that the airs and graces of one, pass almost unnoticed; but that poor little Meredith, with her pretty black eyes—I'm *sorry* for her, though I cannot help hating her!”

“Oh, Regina!” I exclaimed, reproachfully, “how uncharitable you are! You should only be too thankful, that you are made of such callous materials!”

“Ada, how unkind of you!—*I* callous? Why, I call myself tenderness, and susceptibility itself, where those I love are concerned; however,

mark my words if, when Captain Daubigny has proposed to us all round, he does not go and marry some dreadful creature of whom nobody ever heard?"

"If any one less wise on this point than myself, heard you say that, Regina," I exclaimed, "they would think Hugh had *really* asked you to marry him!"

"Well, upon my word!" cried Regina, with her long, merry laugh of glee; "I have told the story so long, and so successfully, that I begin absolutely to fancy myself that it is true!—Do not frown, Ada!—it is only my fun, and frolic!—you should never blame a General, for the death of his soldiers, if the battle be won!"

What reasoning!—However, to argue a point with a beauty, and that beauty your friend, is bad policy, for I never could be proof against the fascinating spell of Regina Spencer.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. MEREDITH and her daughter went abroad, as they had intended ; and from Lausanne, I heard from the poor little girl—she was much the same in health ; and a postscript from her mother, said, her spirits were returning. I could not help wishing Hugh could read the letter, and feel for one moment the humiliation endured by that poor girl, taken from the bosom of her family, to seek, in another land, restoration of blasted hopes ! My Aunt Daubigny, was as much, perhaps more to blame, for having tried to influence the affections, of so wild and

hair-brained a creature as her son. Mrs. Hillier heard from me, all the "goings on," and treated them with her usual philosophy.

"Time will show, my dear—why should you fuss yourself?—it will all come right some day, no doubt; and then you will see how foolish it is, to interfere with her people's miseries in this world, when we have all a share to ourselves."

"God knows we have!" was my unrequired answer; and I wondered if I should ever be enabled to bear the course of events, with the recklessness of Regina Spencer, or the indifference of Mrs. Hillier.

A week or two after this, when we were anxiously looking out for Gertrude's return, an event occurred, which brought out Hugh in his true colours, and proved him the generous-hearted creature, that I always knew him to be, in spite of his faults. It was the failure of Mr. Meredith's bank! I speak not of the agony,

distress, and difficulty, into which the family, and hundreds of fellow-sufferers were plunged ; nor of the heartless speeches of my Aunt Daubigny, congratulating herself upon the escape of Hugh ! But I pause to think of the grief of Hugh himself, and the energetic way in which he one day took up one of those speeches, and vowed, with his natural vehemence, that whether he liked, or whether he hated Miss Meredith, "*which was no business of anybody's,*" the loss of her thousands, and tens of thousands, made not one iota of difference in his feelings, past, present, or to come ! His practice "was as good as his profession ;" for, about two months after the event, when the sensation had subsided in a measure, and the whole ruined family of the Merediths, were at Lausanne ; with the sole prospect before them, of living 'on Mrs. Meredith's jointure of six hundred a year, instead of the Banker's income, of twenty thousand, Hugh chose to make a tour,

the motive of which was known only to his father, and the consequence of which was, a renewal of the old flirtation between himself, and the Banker's pretty daughter !

“Ada!” I remember my Aunt Daubigny's exclaiming, as she rustled into the room in her portly wrath, one day, “Hugh's mad ! stark mad !—he must be—it is the only excuse I can find for him ! What do you think of his having really gone to Lausanne—of his being actually there at this moment, and exposed to all the dangers of *those* Merediths ! Did you ever hear such a thing ?—of course he is mad—nothing else can be said ! Those Merediths, of all people, too !—people of whom I never entirely approved, as you may remember, but whose advances I did not discourage, because I You see I was placed in a difficult position . . . Hugh seemed to like the girl ; and in spite of her forwardness, I was unwilling, you see, to but to think of his going there, amongst

them all now !—Heaven knows what the consequence may be !—think of the *spec* : he is now, for that girl ! Imagine how much more vigorous their set will be at him now, than it ever *was*, even !—*before*, they aimed at our *connexion*, and now—they see they must aim at the money !—Well ! he is mad, of course ; and as to getting the Admiral to exert his parental authority, it is hopeless ; for he declares Hugh is old enough to be left to himself—did you ever hear such a thing ?”

Yes—I had often heard of such things, and knew, moreover, that there were many more Lady Grace Daubignys, in the world, than Captains Hugh !—and I never was more convinced of this, than in the course of the following summer, when, during a season of distress and trial to ourselves, which prevented our entering into the concerns of others, we were told, that preparations were making for the marriage of Miss Meredith, with my cousin, Hugh Daubigny ;

which preparations were completed more rapidly than those affairs generally are, in order that young Mrs. Daubigny might accompany her husband, with his regiment, to some of the foreign states. . . . Long years have fled since then . . . I forget where they went, but I remember my Aunt telling me, it was the happiest day of her life, when she saw her daughter-in-law, out of the house ; which made me estimate the depth of her affection for "*those Merediths*" in the days of their prosperity !

It was a bright day for me, when Gertrude returned. It was one of those few moments of rapture which we enjoy in our pilgrimage through life ; but when I had clasped her, again and again, in my arms, I could not avoid seeing the awful and striking change, that five months had effected.

Captain Kynaston instantly read the expression of my countenance, and called me into another room—I was trembling from head to foot.

“ Harry ! what a fearful change ! ”

That was all I could say, and in vain he tried to reassure me—in vain he told me, that he watched her with the eyes of a love, as fond and deep as mine could be ; but I shook my head !

“ You have hardly known her two years, and I have lived upon her looks, for nearly twenty,” was my answer ; and then he went on to entreat me, to listen to reason—that they had met a very “ stiff gale ” in the Mediterranean, and that Gertrude had been perfectly overcome by sea-sickness—which circumstance, added to the fatigue, was the only cause of her haggard appearance ; and if I would but observe, without flying so precipitately to conclusions, I should see that she was not thinner—that her sweet face, was as rounded, in its infantine beauty, as it had ever been ; in short, he argued and persuaded, with the feverish vehemence of a man, who *would* not see the worst !

Oh! how dreadful it was, to think that they had all been buoying me up with good accounts—that the letters from the Vernons, (our friends in Malta,) Captain Kynaston, and even Gertrude herself, had all spoken of improved, and lastly of rëestablished health; and then that I should find her, meet her, thus! It was no use trying to deceive me now—in spite of all they insisted, I was perfectly convinced, Gertrude was infinitely worse, than when she went away!

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM the day of Gertrude's return, it seems hardly necessary to remark, that my favour at home declined. I was prepared for it, and therefore I sank quietly into the secondary place ; but there were times when I heard my sister turning on her sleepless pillow, that my heart would fill with the most despairing forebodings ; and I shuddered to think, supposing it pleased God to take her guileless soul, what a blow it would be to the father, who saw nothing but her on earth !

A few weeks' perfect tranquillity, after her

tempestuous voyage, tended to restore her in a measure ; but even Harry Kynaston could not help acknowledging, that she had been better in the summer climate of Malta ; and he was now painfully anxious that their marriage should be hastened, in order that he might take her either to Italy or Madeira. His seat in Parliament, he looked upon as a trifle, to be thrown aside at the faintest word of consent from her ; but she withheld that consent, because of her scruples of being an invalid wife upon his hands. This, however, he instantly over-ruled, and at last they settled it, for the early spring appeared to be reviving her. Just as this obstacle was overcome, another started up, which is almost always the case, where love and anxiety are great ; and it came in a form which obliged Harry to start for the north of Scotland, without an idea when he might return. His grandmother, who resided there, and was a very old woman, had been taken suddenly and alarm-

ingly ill—she was his only surviving relation, and had been a mother to him—she expressed a most overwhelming desire to see him once again, before she died ; and the letter was dictated by herself, in such pathetic terms, that he hardly needed Gertrude's entreaties, that he would set aside every feeling of reluctance to leave her, and go.

I was not present at their parting, but I know what *he*, that gallant, warm-hearted, brave creature, must have felt, when he could not see one of us, after he had taken leave of her ; and I know what she must have suffered, because there were none of her usual floods of tears ;—she sat for two or three days after his departure, with her hands before her, the work untouched, her books unopened, and her piano kept closed, at her particular request. His books of songs, too, were put away till his return ; and she never even looked at his picture till his first letter arrived ; and then she shed the first shower

over picture and letter. Oh! there were few in the world like Gertrude Carrysfort; for her love was so pure, and deep, and yet so unobtrusive, that no one could accuse her, except for those few days, of being too occupied with her own feelings, to give a thought to those of others;—she was quite as ready to devote herself to us, as she always had been—ready to write my father's letters, and willing to dress my little sister's dolls, even were she called away in the middle of one of those passionate effusions of her own dear love!

Frances was now in town for the season; she appeared to us all, to be at the very summit of prosperity; but her opinion of the worth of her coronet was rapidly diminishing, and she would occasionally break out in the exclamation,—

“Happy!—yes! happy after a fashion; but depend upon it, no woman was ever perfectly happy yet, with such a swarm of ‘my sisters

this, and my sisters that,' appended to her, setting aside the excruciating Dowager, who actually complained to Ellerslie the other day, because I declined driving her in my bijou of a pony phaeton, round Hyde Park, and told her the barouche was always at her service, if it were an open carriage she wanted !”

“In short,” said I, in answer to this, one day, “you must be in the heart of a civil war, from your account ?”

“And no wonder,” retorted Frances ; “I get so imposed upon by these people, on account of my amiability—don’t laugh, Ada, because you know I was never of a quarrelsome nature at home ; but these Ladies Crewe have all married poor men—silly creatures, they have made love matches,—don’t blush, Gertrude, for I meant nothing personal ;—and, therefore, if I do not make myself a regular fag, and drudge for them, I am called unsisterly ; and Ellerslie says, in his pleasant foolish voice, that when I

can be so charming abroad, he thinks it a great pity I do not keep up the ball for our own fire-side—as if I could be equal to the fatigue of both !”

Frances was very fond of taking Regina Spencer out in her “miniature equipage,” as the coachmakers call them, because she said she looked so well; and she constantly called for Gertrude and myself, because one was lovely, the other very pretty, and both beautifully dressed. Frances always did everything for effect, and people called her vain; but I found a ready excuse for such vanity—it was the love of pleasing, *largely developed!*

· CHAPTER XIV.

ONE evening, we were begged by Frances to ask her to tea, as the Dowager was going to have one of her "daughter" parties; and we did so. It is a curious feeling, to have the married member of one's family, back in her "old accustomed place," by the kindred hearth, without the husband; and we all felt this on the evening, when Frances ran in so unceremoniously, just as if she were our own again. We had no one but Regina Spencer; so we three sat round the little table, where we had always grouped ourselves "in other days," whilst

my father stood by the piano, where Regina was singing.

She had a full rich voice, and a very touching style of singing ; but I never could endure her songs—they were wild, joyous, bravura sort of compositions, which my father admired beyond every other kind, and which she used to sing with such glee, and yet such feeling, that though I never approved, I could not fail to admire them. There was one song in particular, for which, I remember, my father always asked, over and over again, and I have every word of it, as indelibly stamped on my memory, at this moment, as if she were still ringing them in my ears. It was a mixture of spirit, and pathos ; in short, it was a song that would never have been admired, had it not been for the beautiful lips that uttered the silvery sounds, and the manner that accompanied it. The words were these—and the way in which

the last line of "They were thine, love! they were thine," was sung, brought it into favour.

1

"Well! they told me in my childhood,
What a bright and wondrous place,
Was the world I was to live in,
And its happy human race.
But I could not comprehend them,
For a tiny world was mine—
One sweet home, and *one* sweet garden—
They were thine, love!—they were thine!

2

Then they told me in my girlhood,
This same world was full of cares,
That, that race were all deceivers,
Weaving misery, and snares;
But I found it full of triumph,
And the work of *snares* was mine!
And the only voice that censured . . .
I was thine, love!—it was thine!—

3

Oh, I loved the giddy sunshine,
Of the world's approving smile ;
And I learnt the art of winning hearts,
By wringing them the while.
And I caught them, and I strung them
All, *save one*, upon a line,—
'Twas the proudest—but the fondest—
It was thine, love !—it was thine !”

Frances had never heard it till this particular evening, and when my father asked for it again, she turned round to listen. No one could say, Regina did not articulate plainly enough ; so not a word was lost, and at its conclusion, Frances turned to me again, and raised her dark eyebrows.

“ Why, girls !” said she, in a whisper,
“ where have your senses been all this time ?
Do you really mean to call yourselves blind, or
are you purposely shutting your eyes ?”

We looked all astonishment, for neither Gertrude or I could imagine, to what she was alluding.

“Impossible !” she exclaimed. “I’m not surprised at you, Adelaide, because you never see anything ; but Gertrude !—do you not perceive the desperate set Regina is making at papa ?”

We both laughed so loud, at this insinuation, that it called forth a reproof from the next room, where the piano was ; but Frances went on :

“It is as plain as daylight ! you blind girls ! Did she ever sing that song before ?”

“Often and often !” I answered ; “papa asks for it every time she comes.”

“Then I am more convinced than ever !—Well ! *I* am safe, you know, and Gertrude is as good as off the books ; but for *you*, Adelaide ! I wish you joy of such a mama-in-law !”

“Heaven forbid !” said I, whilst my eyes

filled at the careless mention of the lost relationship; "but I hope, Frances, you are in joke!"

"I! indeed I am not;—I do not say, that papa returns the devotion of her manner, nor do I say she sung that song *at* him precisely; but only watch the looks!—who ever saw such eyes?—I declare I was quite startled—I am sure she deserves to win him, for that song appears a great exertion, and she spares none of her powers on it!"

"Pray drop the subject," said I, hastily; "the very idea is unbearable!"

"And I wish you had never broached it," added sweet, placid Gertrude; "for the thought of the possibility of such a thing, has made me quite uncomfortable."

"I am sorry," laughed Frances, "really I am, dear Gertrude! but I only wish to put you both on your guard—you have been fostering that beautiful snake to some purpose, I suspect; but of course, Adelaide can stop it, by not asking her so often in future."

“She would think any sudden coolness unkind,” pleaded Gertrude; “we have seen so much of her lately, that it would be difficult to break off; and she is fond of us too.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Frances, rising, and drawing her velvet and ermine round her, with an air of laughable grandeur, in imitation of Regina Spencer’s manner; “when a girl becomes very much attached to me, I assure you, I keep a very sharp look upon Ellerslie, and the different young men, who frequent my drawing-room!”

I wished Frances had not possessed the habit of making those sadly worldly speeches; for true as they were, perhaps, in reality, still they shewed that she looked upon the face of society, with a very uncharitable and suspicious eye. I never could find any pleasure in searching for bad motives for people’s actions;—in the first place, the trouble was great, and in the next, it was raking up troubles for oneself, which even the world wished to hide from you. I do believe

Mrs. Hillier was beginning to inoculate me with her philosophy ; certainly I banished, with no great difficulty, the unpleasant sensations and thoughts, which Frances had summoned, when Regina left the piano, and joined us again with her lively remarks and happy laugh.

It was May, the merry month of May, when Captain Kynaston returned, after his long and anxious absence ; but he had had the satisfaction of paying the last tribute of love and duty, and he came back a much richer man than he went, for the old lady had made him her heir. It seemed, however, that fate was against this marriage ; for his arrival found sweet Gertrude a prisoner to her room, weak and ill, and yet pronounced by the doctors, to be free from any affection of the lungs. They said, she must not think of remaining in London, but that her best plan was, to travel by easy journeys along the south coast of England ; and as Captain Kynaston's yacht was always available, she was

recommended to try the sea, whenever she felt strong enough. My father's parliamentary duties prevented his accompanying us; so Mrs. Hillier, who enjoyed nothing more than travelling, offered to be our chaperon, and we gladly accepted her. Captain Kynaston resigned his seat, on purpose to be one of us; and the children, dear souls, were to be left with their governess at home.

I never felt so utterly wretched, as on the morning we left home. It was a cold raw day, and there was no sunshine to cheer us. Gertrude was so faint, that we hardly knew whether to start, or not; and Captain Kynaston looked miserable. Mrs. Hillier was the only person, whose spirits kept up;—she was the same little thin, spruce, neat, contented figure as ever, not a shadow sat on her placid face. It made me quite angry, for nothing ever ruffled her; and it is much easier to bear sorrow, and annoyance, when you feel you have others to support under

it, who do not bear up as well as yourself—it prevents our feeling so much for our own sufferings.

Well! it was wretched work, but we were ready at last, and started, in the hope of reaching St. Leonard's, in the course of the next afternoon—Gertrude was not equal to the whole journey in one day, now!

CHAPTER XV.

WE remained at St. Leonard's six weeks; during that time, Gertrude seemed to improve so much, that we thought the still more bracing air of Brighton, might be tried, and for a day or two, it revived her; for St. Leonard's had not been bracing enough, and Hastings was much too relaxing. One unlucky day, however, Captain Kynaston prevailed on her, to be wheeled to the pier, in order to embark for a sail. She did so; for his anxiety sometimes amounted to such an agony of entreaty, that her gentle spirit shrank from wounding him by the slightest re-

sistance ; but there happened to be a heavy swell at the time, and poor Gertrude came home more dead than alive, from pure suffering, added to the exertion of trying to appear well for his sake. She was ill for many days after this, and he watched by her side, like a mother. I might live a thousand years, but I am convinced I shall never again witness such devotion, as that of Harry Kynaston ! It was the trembling, deep, intense love of a child. I have seen children love their mothers, with the same *wistful* look of tenderness, that used to melt in his eyes, when he hung over that worshipped creature, in one of her fainting fits ! It was piteous to see him ;—he had no existence, but in her life, and her illness had so completely changed him, that he did not seem the same man—he was so buoyant and gay, when we first knew him, and now he was so restless, nervous and wretched, that he did nothing but stand in the window, and watch his yacht tossing off the coast, or sit on a

low seat by her sofa, with his cheek upon her hand.

Weeks dragged their weary length along; and at last we got to Sidmouth.—There we thought she was decidedly recovering, for she could bear sailing about the tranquil waters of those peaceful and beautiful bays, without suffering in any way; and Captain Kynaston used to whisper in her ear, his ardent hopes, that the following winter would see them both in Madeira, enjoying what he called, “an old-fashioned tête-à-tête!” Whenever I heard these anticipations, I used to think what a merciful, what a blessed gift was hope!—for without it, there would be little happiness in the world; and what would a death-bed be without *hope*? It is hope that smooths the dying pillow, and hope that frees the struggling spirit without a pang.

These were gloomy thoughts; but I saw that Gertrude was dangerously ill, and I blessed

God, from the bottom of my bleeding heart, for the hope which sustained me sufficiently, to look for her recovery—or else, to resign her to God!

“Hope is the companion

Given to the unfortunate, by pitying Heaven.”

And I trust, that throughout that season of trial, I was grateful for the gift. Ingratitude is a dark crime; and when it is practised towards heaven, its dye is black indeed. When was there ever yet, a dispensation which was not so tempered, that the sorrowing heart might acknowledge, “It might have been worse!” I have often breathed those words, when human nature was too refractory to allow of the perfect resignation contained in the holy words, “Thy will be done;” and I humbly believe, that such a sentiment may be accepted on high, in merciful consideration, until time has enabled us to kiss the rod, and meekly breathe the latter aspiration.

“Ada,” said Gertrude to me one day, when Captain Kynaston was not in the room; “you cannot imagine how I reproach myself, for having so completely put a stop to all Harry’s employments—the seat in Parliament—his presence on his own estate—what a selfish, dreadful thing it seems!—do you think he ever regrets his engagement to me?”

“Oh! Gertrude, dearest, what an idea!” was all I could say; “how could it enter your head?”

“It has often done so, Ada—oh, so often! And I think, if I acted honourably, I ought to sacrifice my personal feelings, and at least *offer* to release him!—ought I not?—Do not try to spare me, Ada, dear!—only tell me what is right, and honorable, and I will do it—my own heart is a bad counsellor—I dare not go by it; but my conscience speaks loudly ... oh! echo it, dearest Ada, if you love me!”

“My own Gertrude!....”

I could get no further, for I felt choking—I saw that she was right, but I could not tell her so.

“Ada, I can read your eyes!—no one ever mistook their meaning yet!—I ought to offer to release him, and you know I ought!—oh tell me, and tell me so severely!” she added, with unusual agitation, and clasping her hands over her eyes; “tell me harshly, and I can do it, Ada!”

“Gertrude,” I answered, after a long pause, “I have been thinking, and I cannot judge! Take my advice, and consult Mrs. Hillier—she has known Harry from a child, and perhaps she would tell us how he would bear it—for my part, my darling, I think the generosity would be too great a trial for you.”

“Oh no, no, no!” cried poor Gertrude, quickly; “you do not know how much I could bear, if I thought it was for his good!—You do not know how poignantly I feel, the having thrown

him out of all his duties!—he, who has led such an active life! Sometimes, dearest Ada, I think, if it should please God to spare me, that he may reproach me for having first taught him to endure idleness, and exist without occupation!—and then again, I think if I should die. . . .”

“Oh Gertrude, hush!” said I, with a shudder; “much I can bear, but not that!”

“Well then, dearest, about Mrs. Hillier; are you sure she is not a dear silly old soul?”

“No—I think she has a peculiar quaint way of expressing herself, but she certainly lights upon truths.”

Mrs. Hillier was summoned, and she listened with the tears rolling large and fast down her cheeks—she had a way of calling us “dear love,” when she was overcome, which always made me aware, if she thought the case worthy of deep sympathy; and at this appeal to her judgment, she exclaimed:—

“Don’t, dear love!—don’t make the offer, for it would break his heart, dear love!—besides, if he *did* suffer himself to be released, which no man would under the circumstances, what good would it do?—he would not have spirit to contest another election, and you could not put him back into his old place, if you were to wish it ever so!—don’t, dear love—get well, and then make him work hard for lost time.”

Nothing was said in consequence of this conversation; and we went on from Sidmouth to the different beautiful ports of the south of Devon, with our precious invalid; but, at last, we were obliged to pause. She was worse... oh, God! she was worse!—We were strongly urged to get her to Penzance, to be under the care of an eminent medical man there; and whilst an express was sent to my father, we hurried on till we reached our destination. It was now August; and on one of the most sultry

evenings of the month, she was laid on her sofa, in the verandah, to watch the graceful "Seraph" anchored in Mount's Bay. Harry Kynaston was leaning over the back of the sofa, looking down into her clear blue eyes, and watching the colour, as it rushed up, in its fitful floods, to her very temples.

"Harry!" said she, at last, in a low whisper, and yet so clear and distinct, that I heard every word; "I have something on my mind, and I think I must tell you, because if I should forget it oh, I should never forgive myself!"

"Tell me, my own love," murmured Captain Kynaston, seating himself by her side; "is it anything I can do for you?"

"Yes!—the greatest, *greatest* favour!"

"Then it is granted,—but let me hear it?"

"It is a long story, dearest," said she, sighing; "so to be clear, I must begin from the beginning:—A few days before you reached Eng-

land, from Guernsey, Frances was drinking tea with us, and so was Regina Spencer, one night ; and Frances said something that did not strike me at the time particularly, but since then, it has weighed so heavily on my mind, that I must tell it you !”

“ Well, love,” said Captain Kynaston, with a faint smile, “ we have got so far—now, for the rest.”

“ She suggested to me a dreadful idea,” continued Gertrude, rising on her arm, and speaking earnestly ; “ she hinted at the possibility of my father’s marrying again !—she actually named Regina Spencer !—she told us to be on our guard ; and you know Frances never yet said anything that did not come true—it may seem superstitious, but I certainly do place implicit faith in every wild, and wildest of her strange ideas ; and therefore think what I have suffered, when this prospect of a mother-in-law came

before me!—oh, it has haunted me like a shadow ever since!”

“But, dearest, you will be removed from any such influence, long before Sir Edmund can marry, even supposing such a thing at all likely,” said Captain Kynaston.

“I know it,” answered Gertrude, almost inaudibly, “and that is the reason I now speak.”

“Then don’t tell me your wish, my Gertrude,” continued Captain Kynaston, eagerly, “for then you will see how well I can guess your very thoughts now!—you wish that Adelaide should live with us!—it is like you, my own dearest, to think of every soul around you, and interest yourself in their happiness—it *shall* be—we must ask Adelaide together, some day—we must tell her we shall take no denial,—is not that it, Gertrude?”

“Bless you! Heaven bless you, my own Harry!” exclaimed poor Gertrude, flinging her

arms round his neck, and bursting into tears ; “ you spoil me,—you make me encroach on your generosity—swear to me, dearest, by all you hold most sacred and precious, that you will never forsake Adelaide, if she remain single at home.”

“ I swear by my love for you,” replied Captain Kynaston, earnestly ; “ and I know that is an oath I shall never break—are you contented, Gertrude ?”

“ Quite,” said Gertrude, faintly, and she sank back on her pillows again.

I shall never forget what I suffered during this conversation ; for it was the first time that my mind had ever been impressed with the faintest idea that my blessed sister was aware of the nature of her illness—it was the first time she had ever alluded in any way to the future ; and I saw, through all her tender anxiety for me, that her feelings told her of danger!—I saw that Captain Kynaston was

completely blinded to her precarious state, by the sense in which he took her words . . . I felt what an awful waking there must come for him, some day; and as these thoughts flitted through my brain, no words can half express the desolation of my visions of the future. I said to myself, in the wildness of my anguish, "If I lose her, what have I to live for?" Then, again, she looked so beautiful still, that one glance at the full, clear, rounded cheek, with its tinge, like an ocean-shell, was enough to dispel fears; and yet . . . oh, *must* she die?

"*To die?*—and wherefore should she not depart,
Ere doubt had agonised the trusting heart?
Wherefore not pass away from earth, ere yet
Its mossy bosom with her tears is wet?"

Yet, no!—it was too, *too* dreadful!

I remember, in the midst of all these bitter reflections, that the post arrived; and I saw,

amongst my other letters, one in the address of Maule Carrysfort. I shuddered; for I knew that wherever that man went, he carried a moral pestilence with him; and certainly he never failed, despite the interest he professed in me, to extend its influence most lamentably over my destiny. I say "professed," because the barbarous way in which he had, on two occasions, harrowed up my very soul, proved it was but professed interest; I now began to loathe his name, as the author of the blighted existence I was dragging on. He was a creature who seemed to delight in the savage satisfaction of seeing how much mental pain he could inflict; and I shuddered at the sight of his writing, because I knew he never wrote unless he had something to communicate, which he "happened to know" nobody else could tell me. It was this that made me postpone the opening of his letter, and take my father's first. It announced his intention of being with us in

a few days, with the children ; and then I took the large epistle of Carry, the letters of which, being about half-an-inch in size, took up some space, but limited the news to one or two subjects only.—I opened, and read, that she and Rose were quite well, and hoped Gertrude and I, and everybody and everything, were the same, and then came this paragraph:—

“PAPA was angry with Rose to-day, because her eyes were very red, and she would not learn her lessons, for crying for dear Colonel Denison, who was drowned in a ship. Rose loved him, and so did I; and I love you, too, dear sister Ada, and I am

“YOUR OWN LITTLE CARRY.”

The letter fell from my hands—I know not what made it drop, for they were closely clenched. I staggered to the window for air, and then I tried to fix my dancing eyes on

that cruel fiend's heartless tale of the loss
of the vessel, and supposed loss of every
soul on board that vessel, which had conveyed
..... Pass on this is too much to
bear

CHAPTER XVI.

I SAT down, after a steady perusal of this letter, and began to reflect on the extraordinary spell which that man appeared to possess, and the power he had of becoming master of my most secret feelings, and using that power accordingly. I think I began now to see him in his true light—he was bent on persecuting me with weapons against which he knew I had no defence ; and though, at the scene of his first communication with me, respecting the existence of Mrs. Denison, he seemed shocked, touched, and softened, by the silent despair into which he had plunged me, still I was now becoming

more and more convinced, that it was no *interest* in me that prompted him to be always the first, to open the floodgates of grief with so remorseless a hand ; but it was a spirit of *revenge* !—I was the sole object on which he could exhaust his hatred of the Carrysforts, because I was the only one over whom he felt he held a wand, which could crush to the very earth, if opportunity and fate gave him liberty to use it. Though all the facts of which he took upon himself to inform me, would have come to my ear in course of time, robbed most probably of some of their poignancy by gentle dealing, still he made a point of being the first to thrust them, without one word of comfort or consolation, directly upon my notice ; till now, the very sight of his handwriting sends a thrill of anguish through me, which it is difficult to describe.

This letter plunged me into profound grief, of course, but my sanguine spirit lived upon the words, “ *supposed* loss of every soul on

board;" no one could assist me, I knew, because, owing to the cause that had parted us, I was aware that my father would consider it wrong, were I to breathe a syllable of inquiry on the subject; therefore, I had to hoard the dim hope within my heart, and live in anxious expectation of hearing the silent name uttered by chance, or classed amongst those saved from the wreck.

Such swift recurring events as these, now roused me to such a pitch of indignation, mingled with my affliction, that I at last made up my mind to write to Maule Carrysfort, and tell him, that on no possible pretence, in future, was he ever to venture to address me again;—and when I had sealed and sent the letter, I breathed more freely . . . I was better!—I thought I had done with him!—that I had shaken off my foe, though at so dear a price.—Well might I have said:—

“Oh, why art thou my foe?—how lies my peace
Between thy good and thee?—Is it thy good
To slay my peace? * * *
* * * Thine eyes are better turned away!
For gazing on them, human as they are,
I have a feeling of a heart of stone!
And from my hopeless tears the spirit flies,
That frozen on my lids I feel them hang!
Thou rock!—Affliction did I plead to thee—
I turn from thee, Despair!”

Yes—I was glad he *wrote*, for had it been in person . . . oh, it would have been much worse! . . . I had now but one most ardent wish,—it was, that I might never see him again!

A few days after this, my father and the dear children arrived, and with them, our family physician; my father was seriously alarmed at some letter which Mrs. Hillier had written, and he could not rest until this medical man had consulted with our kind and amiable Penzance friend.

I shall never forget the morning of the consultation.—Gertrude was aware that it was to take place, and she had made Dr. ——— promise to tell her the plain truth, or rather what she called “*her doom*,” as soon as he completely understood every feature of the case; but she begged to see him alone, so Captain Kynaston, I, and little Rose, sat in the drawing-room. The child had got some noisy toy to play with, and was romping up and down the room, and in and out of the windows. I was on a low ottoman, at the open window, and Harry was talking loud and fast, as if to drive away the oppressive languor which was stealing over us, as we heard in mute suspense, the heavy tread of the two doctors, in the room over our heads.

“Dr. ——— is hardly a fair judge yet,” said Captain Kynaston; “he has only seen dear Gertrude these last three days, and the heat of the weather has made her very much worse

than she was a fortnight ago—don't you think so, Ada?"

"Indeed," was my answer, "indeed, Harry, she has been declining rapidly for many days!"

"Making a retrograde movement, you mean," interrupted Captain Kynaston, quite in an irritated voice; "that is quite a different thing to *declining*."

"I trust most fervently," I answered, "that we may hear it *is* so!"

"Well, thank God, I know you always look on the *dark* side of things, Ada, my dear girl," said Captain Kynaston, chafing again, and drawing his hair back from his forehead; "but I do wish these fellows would be quick."

As he said this, Dr. ——— opened the door, and walking stealthily in, closed it again cautiously; coming straight up to me he took both my hands in his, and shook them with mournful earnestness. My breath seemed to stop, and I looked a sort of appeal to-

wards Captain Kynaston, who instantly advanced.

“Come,” said he, “pray do not torture us by this delay, Dr. ———, but tell us—you find Gertrude . . . not so well . . . I fear?”

“Must I be candid?” answered Dr. ———, looking at each of us in turn; “because, where I am requested to tell the truth, I consider it an act of charity to conceal nothing.—I have this moment left your sister . . . she is a model of heavenly resignation and patience.”

“Oh, my God!” uttered Captain Kynaston, clasping his hands over his eyes; “unsay that word! You don’t mean that . . . that . . . she is in *danger*, Doctor?”

“Harry!” I exclaimed, “hear the truth, I implore you!—look at Dr. ———, and read it in his face!—Oh!” I continued, whilst I felt the tears pouring down my face, “tell him, my dear Dr. ———, for mercy’s sake!—tell him, for he will not believe!—*is* she not going!”

"Alas! . . ." began Dr. ———.

"I cannot *bear* it," groaned Captain Kynaston; "it is too much! she cannot die! what have you all been thinking of?—will nothing save her?—take all I have in the world!" he cried, flinging his arms wildly open, "but save my Gertrude!—Dr. ———, if you have a heart to feel such torture, save her!"

"I grieve for you, Captain Kynaston," said poor Dr. ———, with his voice trembling, and hoarse, and his eyes overflowing; "but it is beyond my power—it is beyond human art—it has been so for many weeks; and if you *will* but believe it, you will smooth that sweet young lady's death-bed, for I assure you, her only anguish on this trying occasion has been for *you*!"

"Bless her! bless her!" ejaculated Captain Kynaston, fervently; then turning to Dr. ———, and grasping his arm, with a look of frenzy, he said: "But once for all . . . before my senses

leave me . . . tell me, is there *no* hope?—speak out! I can bear it!—is there *none*?”

“*None*, my good sir,” was the gentle, but decided reply; “and since you know this, you ought to prepare yourself, as soon as you can, for the fatal change—I assure you solemnly, that a very few days will complete the . . .”

“In mercy, go!” cried I, springing forward, when I saw the attitude of frantic despair which Captain Kynaston had taken; “leave us, dear Dr. ———, till by-and-bye.”

He left the room in silence; and then a sense of what he had announced to us, came suddenly upon me, and I stood with my eyes fixed on the door with glazed steadiness. I was calm, very calm—paralyzed, and yet vividly awake to all that had passed.—Not so Captain Kynaston—he was walking up and down the room, striking his hands on his forehead, and muttering exclamations of passionate grief and despair: till at last, unable any longer to control his

feelings, he flung himself on his knees by the sofa, buried his face in the cushions, and sobbed like a child !

Oh ! a man's grief is an awful sight !—I was so terrified at the bursting agony of those sobs, that I sat down with a feeling of awe and horror, which was quite fearful. Rose, my rude and noisy Rose, who had ceased her romping, at the first entrance of Dr. ———, was subdued by this sight into the quiet of a lamb—she cowered down by me, with her little face blanched with dismay ; and covering it over with a part of my dress, she whispered to me, in a strange and broken voice : “ Tell him *not*, Ada !—tell him *not* ! ”

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPTAIN KYNASTON gave way to agonising grief, with all the impetuosity of his character ;—there was no soothing him, for he was more like a madman than a rational being ; and I sought the chamber of my dying sister, to learn from her, that humble resignation, and patience, which not another soul in the house could teach.

When she first saw me, a touch of human weakness overpowered her, and whilst she extended her hand towards me, she hid her face in her pillow, and both of us indulged for

some minutes, in our grief. We were then clasped in each other's arms, in the fondest embrace, that ever drew two hearts together,—one long, long, passionate embrace; after which I took my place by her bedside, and listened to her, as she talked hurriedly and incoherently of her sorrow, at leaving me alone . . . her dread that my future was a clouded scene . . . her hopes that Harry would bear her loss with fortitude, and that her father would be kind to me !

I ask those who have sat by the side of a loved relation, when the struggles of the parting spirit shake the powers of the mind, if it does not make them shrink within themselves?—She called often for Harry in the course of that night, but he could not summon courage to approach; and I hardly think she knew he was not present, for she kissed my father's hand repeatedly, when he raised her for breath, and murmured, in the tone which her voice always

assumed towards Captain Kynaston,—“ Heaven bless you, for your tenderness, love !”

The next morning, she was in a deep sleep, which lasted all day ; but towards evening, she put aside the curtain, and opened her glorious eyes full upon me.

“ Ada, dear—why is not Harry here ?”

The question was asked with so much surprise, that I was obliged to tell her the truth, that he was unequal to seeing her in the state in which she had been for several hours ; and then I offered to call him.

“ No—I must speak to you first, Ada—you know that I am leaving you, my own sweet sister—they have told you it will be soon, and I can tell you from my own feelings, that I shall never see more than *one* other sun set. But, as far as regards myself, my mind is beginning to be very peaceful, though I will confess, that many and painful have been my struggles, to acquire that calm—that tranquillity, which, I can

now plainly see, the world, even with all the blessings and delights which it has ever had for me, can never bestow. You are well aware, darling Ada, and have felt as I have done, that our dear mother planted in the young hearts of her children, the seeds of a faith, which now, in these my latter days, seem to flourish and increase, with a growth amazing to myself, in my heart. Whilst my poor perishing frame is wasting with disease, divine grace blossoms, and is enlarged, and I repose with sweet serenity, with confiding comfort, on the firm Rock—that Rock of Ages, which can never be removed. I feel my own unworthiness, Ada, and truly do I know, that

“‘ In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to *His* Cross I cling ;’

and this idea is unspeakable consolation.”

Much did my sweet sister say upon this

one blessed subject—much!—and oh ! how did every word sink deep into my heart ! But I will not dwell upon her last expressions. They are too sacred in this place—in a story which the world will call a novel, a name which brings with it oftentimes the sneers of the wise, the deeper scorn of the pious. But why should not a novel convey lessons of instruction—of piety—of morality, as any other vehicle ?

However, to proceed. After a long pause, succeeding the holy thoughts and words, which heavenly hope dictated, she suddenly exclaimed,

“ Ada, I want to look at the dear Seraph once more ; so when Harry comes, I must ask him to bring it nearer in to the shore.—How happy I have been, Ada ! what a blissful life have I spent ! But one perplexing sorrow on earth remains !” and she laid her head on my shoulder.

“ Harry ?” asked I, tremulously.

“No, Ada,—*you*!—I leave him with deep regret, but no fears for his future happiness ; for a man has the whole world in which to seek it, and a woman has but her own home!—Oh, Ada, if I could but think I left you in a happy home!—it is that idea only that seems to keep me lingering in life. God grant you may be some day appreciated ! God grant you may be rewarded, dearest Ada, for all you have been to me !”

It was dusk before Captain Kynaston could be prevailed upon to enter the room ; and in that hour of trial, I saw how far short, falls the mental strength of a man, in comparison with that of a woman—for when I, and even little Rose, met the moment undismayed, he trembled at the threshold, with his head thrown back, and his arm across his eyes, dreading to see her, yet longing to enter !

The next evening the sun was setting in magnificence, and the last rays were penetrating

through the venetians into the chamber of death. I was going to draw the blind down, to shield the pale forehead of the sufferer, when she opened her eyes, and said,

“No, Ada!—let me enjoy it. I shall never see another, in this world—call Harry.”

“I am here, love,” said the well-known voice, from behind her curtain—“close to you.”

She wished to be taken to the window, to gaze once more with him, on the “Seraph,” as the sun shone down on the graceful yacht, as it heaved slowly about on the placid waters of the bay; and she turned, after that long last look, to the arms which were supporting her, with the only bitter sigh, I ever heard her breathe. All that evening Captain Kynaston was alone with her, and when I heard him dash up the stairs, which led to Mrs. Hillier’s sitting-room, I flew to Gertrude’s side.

“It is over!” said she, in the faintest murmur, as she laid her head back with closed eyes,

and tears oozing through the long curled lashes, "The last, the greatest pang is over—I have bid him farewell, Ada, and he must not come into this room again—bless him, oh my God! How little able he is to bear such a scene!—to think, that my loss should have bent such a strong, brave heart! . . . but it will pass!"

I was in this hour strongly impressed with the strange and selfish weakness of the stronger sex, who, with very few exceptions,

"Fly the hour of danger,
The bed where sickness lies;
And leave perhaps a stranger
To close the dying eyes;"

for had there been no one besides himself in the house, I am convinced, Captain Kynaston would not have watched the final extinction of the fluttering lamp of life, without compulsion; for many hours after his last interview with Gertrude, he sat so absorbed in grief, that he seemed equally incapable of understanding, or

answering the questions, addressed to him by poor Mrs. Hillier ; who considered it her duty to harrow up his tortured feelings, by a species of talkative consolation, of which he only heard the sound, without being able to feel the substance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THROUGHOUT that fearful night, Gertrude lingered on—starting if Captain Kynaston moved in the room above, and uttering faint hopes, that he would come and see her just once again. I told her, he should be called for towards morning, when the sun was rising, to gild that beautiful ocean again. The return of light brought back a gleam of strength, and the brilliant loveliness of her face returned; which made me wish, he could see her once more, as

he had first known her ! Her eyes were so bright, and the colour of her cheek

..... "Looked like health,
Offering hope, vain hope, to the pale lip ;
Like the rich crimson of the evening sky,
Brightest when night is coming." * *

In short, I roused him from his lethargy, and told him it would console her, if he could summon fortitude to see her.

"You are deceiving me !" was his passionate exclamation. "She is gone !—you *know* she is, and you want me to go and look on all that faultless beauty, and play the madman !—I cannot, Ada !—the blessed soul is gone—I cannot see her—I cannot look at her, when her eyes will not turn on me again ! It may be weak, and even wicked, but no one loved her as I did !—I cannot see her, if she is gone."

I assured him, I implored him ; and at last he tottered down stairs, with a step as feeble, and unsteady, as if he had been prostrated by weeks of illness.

When he entered, Gertrude had just strength enough to rest her head on his shoulder, and looking up in his face, said, "Your promise, Harry!—Heaven bless you!"

Those were her last words; but her last action was, grasping my father's hand and mine, and joining them together, with a look of the most pathetic entreaty. How well he must have understood both action and look!—A few more short moments, and we listened in vain for another breath—I remember the intense agony of that moment of suspense. When the interval was so long, that it admitted of no sort of doubt, I remember calling Harry to move, and let me look at her sweet face; but he did not answer—back rushed the life-blood to my heart—my father almost darted to the bedside, which I had dreaded to approach, and raised Captain Kynaston.

His head had been gradually drooping for some minutes; but until then, I did not know

that he was nearly as cold, nearly as lifeless, and quite as senseless, as the beloved being, who was now lost to us—it was all over.

Stagnation, is the only word which can be used to express the state of that dismal house, during the whole of the wretched day. The total cessation of usual occupation—the consciousness that the busy attendance in the sick chamber was now needless, and the impossibility of meeting the gay sunshine of glad nature, which was going on outside the darkened house—all this was only to be felt, not expressed.

Then the tiptoe movements of the servants about the rooms, and the hushed voices of the dear children in their nursery—Rose having hidden herself in a corner, and Carry having put away all their toys of her own accord—all, all—all told the dreadful tale, of the departure of the best loved one!—and oh! what a night was passed by us all!

The next evening, Captain Kynaston came to

sit alone with me in the drawing-room, for my father wished to see no one but the children; and Harry then told me, he should just remain at Penzance, to be chief mourner, and then sail immediately for Naples—after that, he intended applying for a ship;—

“But remember, Adelaide,” said he, in a faltering voice; “if it should ever be in my power to render you the slightest service that friendship could perform; or do anything, however great, that you might wish a brother to undertake, apply to me, and depend upon it, that there is no exertion within the range of possibility, that I should ever dream of stopping at—and you will write to me, Adelaide, will you not?”

Tears were my only answer—silent tears, wrung from me, by the kind warmth of his address.

“You *must* write,” he continued, energetically; “for no place on earth will ever hold

such interest for me, as the spot which you inhabit.—Sir Edmund will not care for me now—I see quite well, that old associations will be revived, and that he will remember his former repugnance to me, now that the only link, the one dear link that bound me to you all, is gone. Ada, try to think of me as your brother!—if it is not painful, call me so in your letters!”

I have said before, that the different feelings and constitutions of different people, have always filled me with perfect astonishment. Here was the man, who, a few hours before, had been bowed by grief and anguish, to childlike abandonment and despair, now entreating me to call him by the title, to which a few short hours before, he had lost all claim, to which he could never now attain! The name of brother, must have brought *her* back to his mind, as vividly as it did to mine, and yet oh, it is incomprehensible!

The next morning, I felt that I should like to

look at the Seraph once more, and that I could better bear to do so, whilst the precious form was with me in the house, than when they had taken her away for ever; so, whilst I shaded my eyes from the dazzling summer's sun, glittering on the sea, I sought for the now most dear and interesting object, that had been our companion for so many long months.

There, on the waters, tossing in the bay, was the graceful Seraph, with her pale blue pennant flying, half-mast-high!

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN we arrived in town, Regina Spencer and her mother were in the house to receive us; kind as they were, the necessity of entertaining them was most painful; and as the sight of the old rooms, and the small work-table, and the frame and basket of worsteds, all brought back too vividly, her whom we had left behind in her early grave, it may be supposed that I had very little heart or spirit, to combat the flow of Regina's conversation, although it touched on many interesting points. She talked first of Frances.

“There is quite a reformation in her establishment, Ada. She had a battle royal with the old Countess, who conquered, by voting for a separate establishment; little dreaming that that was the point Lady Ellerslie had been aiming at so long! The Earl, for a wonder, was perfectly quiescent, even although it was his dear mamma, who was the aggrieved one; and now the Dowager lives with ‘my daughter Gordon,’ and her seven olive-branches, in one of the Regent’s Park houses, far enough from ‘*my son’s wife, who was the eldest Carrysfort!*’ ”

“I’m astonished,” was my remark, “that the Earl allowed such a change, without making some sort of struggle for his mother.”

“Oh, not he, *now*,” answered Regina; “he is quite a different person since he got into the Cheshunt set;—young Lord Cheshunt has just attained his majority, and he and Lord Ellerslie seem bent upon running a race together—they

are a wild pair, and I rather think Frances dislikes it ; but you know the Earl is very much wedded to associations, and Lord Cheshunt was a school-fellow in days of yore ; so . . . but that reminds me—you knew our old friend Col. Denison, Ada ?”

Rose, who had been crouched by me all the time, and whose rough, but feeling little heart, bled whenever her favorite was mentioned, now began getting up a suspicious face, as a moisture gathered in her wide blue eyes ; but Carry spoke out directly, and saved me the pain of answering the question, which she put in her own words thus,

“He was drowned in a ship ! Maule said so, and Rose cried, and papa——”

“The ship was drowned, love,” said Regina, in her merry way ; “but Colonel Denison was saved, with all the passengers and crew—surely, Ada, you knew he was not lost ?”

“I never heard of anything but the wreck,” I answered, with that calmness which shows how completely a newer and later grief, may deaden the poignancy of one gone by ; “for we have not been in the way of news lately.”

“No,” continued Regina, “but I thought the papers would have told you—or rather, I thought it would have struck you, knowing him pretty well, and he being now an official personage. However, perhaps you were not interested—*I was*, because I used to admire him.”

She ran on, rapidly and thoughtlessly as ever, and I listened, with my face buried in Rose's ringlets; for it would never have done to have betrayed anything accidentally to Regina Spencer—she was so touchy on the score of friendship, that had she suspected to what extent I had withheld my confidence from her, with regard to Colonel Denison, she would have left no stone unturned, before she had ferreted out the whole truth. As it was, she

went on, pouring into my almost unconscious ear, a whole tissue of family gossip.

“ You remember Ada, Lady Grace Daubigny’s youngest daughter, Grace ?—well ! she goes on flirting with that younger son, to the utter extinction of all the hopes of Madame Mère, who has still several stray titles on her list for either of them. I used to think the flirtation only a recreation ; but I see now it is getting serious, for she grows a perfect icicle when he approaches, which is one of the six certain signs !—don’t you know them ?

“ ‘ A blush—a sigh—
Or a downcast eye,
Or a semblance of careless scorn ;
A look askance,
Or a *frigid glance*,
Or the air of a spirit worn !’

“ You see, Ada, I know them by heart !—but seriously speaking, if Grace persists in taking

that hapless and handsome younger son, your worthy aunt, with her tuft-hunting propensities, will expire in a fit of some sort, to a certainty."

People think they are amusing friends in low spirits, when they rattle on in this strain ; and I believe my father *was* amused, but it was all lost upon me, until I had thoroughly weighed the subject with which my mind was engrossed ; and that I had only leisure to do, in the silence of night, when no sound disturbed the stillness, beyond the soft and regular breathing of little Rose, by my side.

Oh, the dark cruelty of Maule Carrysfort's character !—he could tell me of blows that dashed my cup of human happiness away ; but of the existence of the merciful drop reserved by pitying Heaven, he carefully abstained from informing me !

However, whatever his motives, whatever his intentions, it was not for me to judge him—

“In that dark hour, when follies lose disguise—
When crimes, in shape deformed and odious rise—
Like giant fiends, impatient of control,
To count their rights, and claim their forfeit soul;”

no doubt he would have his reward, so I closed my eyes with the sole ejaculation of “Let him rest !”

CHAPTER XX.

FRANCES was our next visitor, and she came to take me home, to dine with her *en tête-à-tête*.

“And the Earl?” said I, as we sat alone, and my eyes rested on the sharpened features, and more haughty expression, of my sister; “what is he doing with himself to-night?”

“Oh! dining with Cheshunt, as usual, and making a fool of himself, in one of the thousand ways which they have taught him.—Only imagine their having made Ellerslie learn to sing songs! —*he*, poor creature, who had just as much idea of singing as a tea-kettle, if so much!—and

such songs, too!—Of course they do it for their own amusement, if I may judge from the roars which deafen me till daybreak, when he gives a men's dinner party here; but I'm so provoked and annoyed that he will suffer himself to be made such a butt of!—and he never sees it!—I might talk to him for ever, and he still persists. — Depend upon it, Ada," continued the Countess, speaking with increasing energy, "it's a very bad speculation to marry a man whom your friends can laugh at!—no gold, and no coronet, can dazzle one so blind, as not to see ridicule; and I would rather stand the sneers of a whole world, than see my husband the mark of one glance of mocking derision! and yet," said she, sinking back with an air of despondency, "I shall live to see worse than even that, I fancy."

This was the way in which Frances constantly broke off her vehement speeches; and as it was not a subject on which a sister even could ques-

tion or dilate, I found her hints and inuendos incomprehensible. There was another peculiar circumstance I once remarked, and, when once observed, of course it struck me more and more at every repetition; it was, that if Lord Ellerslie came home after one of these parties, whilst I was still in the house, Frances would leave the room hastily, and say,

“I must just speak to him before he comes in.”

And sometimes he returned with her, and sometimes not. It was no easy thing to enjoy Frances in a *tête-à-tête*, for the five “My daughters this and that,” were for ever asking themselves to tea; and when they found me there first, they used to say,

“Tell me if I’m *de trop*—be candid, Frances, and send me away if you don’t wish for my company this evening!”

To which Francis could but make one brief reply,

“Not at all—pray stay.”

I was dining with her one evening, and she was detailing to me all the circumstances of the Dowager's having taken her departure.

“It was managed with perfect ease; for you will hardly believe, Ada, that it was Ellerslie himself who voted for it, and actually told her one day after dinner, in his silly way, that he would rather live in a house full of hot water, than see her continually finding fault with him and his establishment!”

“Upon my word!” I exclaimed, “the Earl must be improving!—surely, Frances, *time was* when he would not have dared to have said ...”

“To have said his soul was his own,” interrupted the Countess, quickly; “no—nor would he have turned so restive then, only ... only ...” she hesitated, and coloured, “... you know I told you ... *it was after dinner.*”

I laughed slightly, purely because I could not make any remark, and I knew not what else to do;—there is a sort of laugh so convenient,

that it serves for an answer to many questions, and it gives the audience to understand anything they please ; but Frances seemed nettled, and added,

“It is no laughing matter, I’m sure !—you would not smile, Ada, if you were tacked to a man whom it is utterly impossible to respect !—His own conduct entirely prevents my treating him as a companion, and sometimes hardly as an equal !—but it was my own fault,” said she, suddenly dropping her voice again to its tone of despondency, “it was all my own fault !—I have gained what I married for, which was, my title, and a position, which I now feel to be unenviable ; and I suppose I ought to be satisfied !—so I should be, I think, if Ellerslie did not make himself ridiculous, and allow himself to be laughed at !—I do assure you, Ada, that when he goes up to any of my friends, and I see a smile on their faces, I feel

ready to sink, knowing, the moment we are gone, there will be a joke at his expense !”

It was not long before I had an opportunity of finding that Frances did not exaggerate her domestic troubles. — I discovered it through chance, and *that* through my aunt Daubigny, who was one day talking very energetically on the subject.

“I assure you, Ada, I consider it quite a special mercy that neither of my girls married young Lord Ellerslie ; for since he became hand-and-glove with the Cheshunt set, he has been another man. I remember that poor, dear, misguided boy of mine, Hugh, was introduced at some club to Lord Cheshunt, and I give you my word, Ada, it might have come to an acquaintance, if I had not burnt the card he left for him, without saying a word to Hugh.”

“What a dangerous step to take !” I exclaimed, indignantly ; “it might have been the

cause of a serious quarrel between Hugh and Lord Cheshunt."

"Not at all, my dear," smiled my aunt, with great complacency. "I don't suppose Hugh ever troubled his head about it; and if he had, it would only have been a cut.—However, that was no affair of mine—I had performed my duty, and if your poor sister had done the same, she would never have had to rue the shocking habits into which the Earl has fallen."

"I have heard of nothing but the singing," said I; "and Frances is only annoyed at it, because Ellerslie has not much voice."

"Oh!—she gives that out?—only that?—Well, she is right as a wife and a mother; but still, my dear, that is not all—the songs are drinking songs; and I assure you, I was told the other night, that at a party of his sister's, Lady Mary Lane's, the Earl, Lord Cheshunt, and Mr. Lane himself, were in such a state of intoxication, that they were obliged to be sent

home, for fear of their insisting upon entering the drawing-room; and the Admiral himself saw poor Ellerslie, three weeks ago, sitting at a side supper-table, with a wreath of flowers on his head, utterly ignorant of the cause of the fits of laughter round him!"

"I hope fervently," I ejaculated, when the authority left me no room to doubt the authenticity of the story, "that Frances knew nothing of this?"

"She was there once, my dear—the night of Lady Mary Lane's, but she only *heard* of the flowers;—but really, considering all things, I must say she bears it heroically."

Lady Grace Daubigny had never forgiven Frances for having robbed her of the Earl; so I allowed her to exhale her pity unmolested; but it was a dreadful shock to me, to think that a young man of Ellerslie's age, should have commenced a course of life, which could

only end in his becoming a confirmed drunkard.

Oh, the unutterable horror of such an idea! — the overwhelming disgrace of belonging to a man so lost to himself! — the shame of bearing his name, and knowing it to be a degraded one! — Poor Frances! no wonder her features were sharpened, and her stately brow more cold and haughty still. — And this was what Regina Spencer called quite a reformation in her establishment!

It was not possible to touch on such a subject to Frances — she never allowed me to draw near enough to it to do so; but a few days after this, she sent and begged me to come to her, as she was alone; and she wished me to remain till next day, because Lord Ellerslie was gone to Richmond, and was not to return that night. Our evening passed pleasantly enough, but at about midnight a carriage dashed up to the door, and stopped.

Frances turned deadly pale, and seemed to lean on the table for support. I asked her what she feared; and then her colour returned in its rich, deep glow, but she replied, in a low, hurried whisper,—

“For God’s sake, don’t speak — only listen!”

We were in a small boudoir off the drawing-room; therefore, though we could not distinguish words, we heard the murmur of voices, and a great disturbance on the stairs. My heart began to beat; but I dared not question Frances, for her face was such a picture of grief, vexation, and disgust. She flew suddenly out of the room, and when she returned, she seated herself over the fire, with an air of the most withering disdain; and from between her clenched teeth, and her beautiful compressed lips, came the whistling sound of a word, which nothing but the most utter disgust and horror, could

have wrung from the refined depths of her tutored feelings. — She never spoke to *me!* — the word was muttered to herself—it was the dreadfully expressive, and repulsive word, ... “*Beast!*”

CHAPTER XXI.

“ADELAIDE,” said Regina Spencer, coming to me one day, with a flush upon the marble of her skin, and her eyes sparkling; “I’ve been dreadfully insulted—I don’t think I shall get over it for a long time.—I was amused at first, but the more I think of it, the more I feel it was an insult.”

“Sit down and compose yourself,” said I, full of commiseration, on seeing her agitation; “how did it happen, and what is it?—were you walking without your footman, or what?”

“Oh Ada!—you curiosity!—no!—I’ve not

been insulted, walking ; for I never walked two yards in my life, without assistance—I cannot understand the effrontery of you, English-bred ladies, who walk without attendance of any kind, or conveyance of any sort ! No !—the insult was at Lady Grace Daubigny's, and the person, your sister, the Countess !”

“ Frances !” I exclaimed, laughing.

“ Yes, Frances.—I do not know what I may have done to offend her Ladyship, and of course I care very little ; but it was a sort of insult that I could neither resent nor overlook—so it was very mean of her.”

“ Oh, Regina ! Frances could not commit a mean action !”

“ Do not judge before you hear the particulars, Ada ! I have done nothing to excite the Countess's wrath—I never told her, she married the Earl, when she was on the wrong side of five-and”

“ Regina—*you* are becoming pitiful now !”

“ Well, I will pass that, and speak of the insult, then—I was doing penance at Lady Grace Daubigny’s, when Lady Ellerslie was announced. I thought she was very cool; however, as I treated that as *bien peu de chose*, I allowed my visit to extend itself to the utmost verge of patience and *politesse*, and then rose to go. Well, the girl Daubignys, and Lady Grace, and the Seatons, and Mannerings, who were all in the room, rose as I passed, to shake hands, and to say adieu; but the Countess of Ellerslie was pleased to remain rooted to her chair, and to offer me the second finger of her pale grey glove! Adelaide! it was bad taste—bad manners—bad every thing, and I feel she has insulted me.”

What could I say?—I knew, and had known for many a long day, that Frances had turned from that beautiful and insidious creature, the moment she saw the “set” she was making at my father; and I had often heard her de-

clare, that she should take every opportunity of declaring, by actions, her repugnance to the prospect of such a connection. "Not by words," she added; "because words do harm. I would never frighten a girl from entering the family by words—deeds are twice as powerful, and do not tell half so much against you."

"You have done it," said I to Frances, after Miss Spencer's visit; "Regina is furious, and noticed the slight directly."

"Excellent!" exclaimed the Countess; "I never thought it would succeed so well—it must be a cut, I fancy—it is your turn next, Ada, and then we shall put a stop to this objectionable enterprise of hers."

But no—though I entered with interest into the politics of the family, I could not interfere in them. I listened to the lengthening details of each member in turn, but my spirit had grown too listless now, to rouse in my own

cause—I saw nothing in this world, worth the trouble of worrying one's-self about—I had almost come to Mrs. Hillier's happy frame of mind—she had lived an even life, of nearly seventy years, and was yet often assuring me, that it was unsatisfactory work, living *at all!*—much trouble, and little profit. I looked with apathy on every thing, even the prospect of my father's marriage, for I could not see, that such an event would make me more lonely than I now was.

“The desolate

Is doubly sorrowful when it recalls

It was not always desolate.”

Therefore I never dwelt upon my position ; but I felt it, nevertheless.

The only defect which I observed, as particularly objectionable in Regina Spencer, was her habit of including almost every common acquaintance, in one sweeping sarcasm, and covering the most inoffensive names, with cut-

ting but playful ridicule. She told my father the story of her "insult," as she called it, with so much gay and lively piquancy, that she made him espouse her cause in the most earnest manner; and give her credit at the same time, for having behaved with incomparable temper. Well may it be said,

"What great events, from little causes spring!"

CHAPTER XXII.

A FEW days after this, just when I was beginning to wonder, I had not seen Regina, or heard from her, I was sent for, to speak to my father in the library.

“Adelaide,” he began, in a severe voice, “is this story true, about Frances and Regina Spencer’s meeting at the Daubigny’s?”

“Regina told me, Sir, that Frances had neglected to rise with the rest, when she was leaving the room one day; but I had hoped, the circumstance had been forgotten.”

“Regina may forget it,” exclaimed my father,

in a still harsher voice ; “ but it will be in my power to convince you in a moment, that it is a circumstance I am not disposed to overlook, as I am inclined to believe it is done *with a motive*.”

A curious feeling began creeping over me, which turned me so cold, that I could hardly prevent shivering—the feeling which people, (or perhaps nursery-maids) express, by saying, *some one is walking over your grave*.

“ A motive,” continued Sir Edmund, “ which does Lady Ellerslie very little credit—it was tacitly telling Miss Spencer, in the plainest manner, that she was not to receive in future, the consideration which she has so long been accustomed to meet from us;—it was a step on the part of my eldest daughter, which was sufficient to dissolve all friendship between the families; and disgust Miss Spencer into an idea, that Lady Ellerslie was acting *my* sentiments, had not Regina’s natural candour, led her to tell me the affair as a joke.”

I felt, when my father paused, that it was impossible to soften his anger by any apology, for I knew from Frances, that the crime had been committed for the express purpose, which he suspected.—I therefore only said, “I assure you, sir, I was grieved for Regina, when I saw her feelings were wounded; and I did all in my power, to try to make her think, Frances did not mean, by such a trifle, to show positive disrespect.”

“There you did well,” was the approving reply; “but you ought to know, that nothing, however simple, can be called a trifle, if it be done with so injurious a motive—it is the intention, not the action—and as, after this, it would be disagreeable to me to speak to Lady Ellerslie on the subject, I wish to know, Ada, if you think that she would make an apology to Miss Spencer?”

“Frances!” I exclaimed, hastily; “oh, never!”

my dear father, such a concession on her part, would not be within the bounds of possibility !”

And I could hardly help smiling to myself, when I thought of those two fiery and haughty spirits, ever apologising to each other, even if their warfare had descended to words and blows ! It was just as easy to imagine Regina *giving a blow*, as Frances *offering an apology* !—I was, however, just beginning to breathe more freely, and to hope my father had only sent for me, to negotiate a measure of peace, when he dashed into the dreaded subject, without any preparation ; and whilst I stood, bowed down by the sudden sense of undefined misery, and flinging tears from the back of my hand, as fast as they fell on it, he told me that Regina Spencer was to take the place of our lost mother, to be placed, *over me*, at the head of his establishment ; and that he expected both myself and the children, to pay her the deference, in future, which her change of position would ensure for her as a right !—

Regina Spencer!—was I in a dream?—that girl, of my own age, my own standing, my friend, companion—the girl whom I had corrected many and many a time, for faults which now seemed to sink her low beneath my feet,—was *she* to rise to such an eminence?—to be Lady Carrysfort!—to be our mother-in-law?—Oh! which of the two was most to blame!—she, for her consummate depth, or I, for my feeble blindness! The event that I had looked upon a few hours before, with apathy and indifference, now seemed to increase in importance and magnitude of misfortune, the more I dwelt upon it.—

“Frances!” said I, throwing myself passionately into her arms, “is there no hope!—*must* it be?—what can be done!—is there anything that can avert this calamity?”

“Nothing!” exclaimed Frances, nearly as frantic as myself; “it is all over with us—I see but *one* thing to be done, and that is to

heap scorn, contempt, and insult in every shape upon her, and make her resign this wild idea of reigning over us."

"Impossible!"

"I shall," persisted the Countess; "I am beyond ever being under her jurisdiction, so I can do and say what I please; but for you, dear Ada!—I hardly know what you can do—I cannot ask you to come and live with me, for. . . ."

"Not for worlds," I interrupted, "for I should not like to leave those dear children, for fear—"—

"Ada, you must marry," said Frances, abruptly; "you *must*—you cannot live such a life, such a subordinate life, at your age!"

"Oh, Frances!" I exclaimed, turning away with bitterness, "what advice from you!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

WEEKS passed on.—I met Regina, for the first time, after my father's announcement, as well, that is, as courteously as I could ; and I will do her the justice to say, that nothing could be better than the line of conduct she adopted—nothing more inoffensive and correct—her manner to me was the same as ever, and her address to my father scrupulously calm and dignified ; invariably calling him “ Sir Edmund,” and never retreating to the piano, to sing him the songs she knew I disliked, whilst I was in the room ;—her fondness for the children, too,

won their hearts—they did not remember their own mother, poor souls, and were delighted at the idea of calling her “mamma.” In short, I will say, whether her part were natural or artificial, she played it in a most praiseworthy manner. I could not have believed it of her, for she was sobered down, into positive stupidity, in society ; repulsing, with cool dignity, every attempt from former admirers, to renew flirtations. It was impossible not to acknowledge, that, if my father were bent on marrying at all, he had chosen the best of the set for the objectionable relation.

The wedding was fixed for April ; and I had accepted the kind offer of Mrs. Hillier, to go into Wales with her, for a few months, immediately after it. We spent the Easter at Templeham, as usual, with the Daubignys ; and Frances was also there for a few days, with her wretched-looking husband. On our return to town, I received a very early visit from Regina, one

morning ; her first question was, whether we were sure not to be disturbed, as she had something particular to say ; on my assuring her there was no fear, she locked the door, and took off her bonnet.

“There,” said she, attempting to laugh, and yet edging round, so as to turn her back to the light ; “do not my preparations portend that I am going to say something awful ?”

I looked at her with some surprise, for her bright and fearless eyes, were heavy and swollen, and the pure white of her complexion, evidently crimsoned by recent tears.

“I’ve been weeping, and bitterly,” was her abrupt confession, when I looked thus fixedly at her, without speaking. “I knew you would see it, but I would come—I told mamma, if I did not act whilst I was in the humour, I should break down—I must speak seriously to you, Ada.”

“Something has happened !” I exclaimed.

“No—nothing more than usual. I will tell you what has brought me here—‘*un motif de cas de conscience*,’ so now for it. Ada ! I can no longer suffer, in silence, the conduct of your sister Frances !—I have borne it long and well, I really think, considering my marriage can interfere in no sort of way with her interests ; and when her insults were showered on me in private, I did not fire up ;—now that she has made me a public object of her dislike, at Templeham, before all your family, I come to ask you, to tell me honestly and candidly, without considering my feelings a moment—*do you* share in her sentiments of evident hatred ?—tell me, before it is too late, with your hand on your warm and open heart, Ada, if this marriage be as hateful to you, as it is to her ?”

I burst into tears, and Regina was on her knees, with her arms round my waist, in a moment, sobbing with me.

“ If it is, Ada, tell me, and God knows I will

never creep in like a viper to poison your nest ! God knows, I will never sow dissension between father and child !—Ada ! Be honest, if you even think it cruel ! be honest, and you shall see I can be generous. I will never see Sir Edmund again, if my entrance into your family is to be the cause of the Countess's open anger, and your silent misery. Ada, have mercy, and spare me suspense !”

I was touched, affected, overpowered, by such a proof of utter self-forgetfulness, and generosity, from the “lion heart” of Regina Spencer;—she rose in my sight so infinitely superior to her former self, from that moment, that no words can say how I reproached myself, for indulging in the narrow-minded and selfish prejudice, of which circumstances had rendered her the victim. She cured me with the only remedy, that I could ever have taken ; and although I had much to bear after this, in

every way, not including the taunts of Frances, I was very nearly reconciled to the match, when the papers announced it as having taken place.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I SPENT three months with Mrs. Hillier, in Wales ; and I returned to Richmond Gardens, (I cannot say *home*,) at the closing of the London season.

I had not been happy, for I was never happy now. Besides, Frances and her husband, were getting on wretchedly ; in short, I *could not* be happy, but it was not Lady Carrysfort's fault. On my arrival, she flew down to the very hall-door to meet me ; and she, or her influence rather, drew from my father, the warmest

greeting that had ever been lavished on me by him.

Rose and Carry too, were looking the pictures of health and happiness; and Regina I forgot . . . I meant Lady Carrysfort . . . oh, how beautiful she was!—She had just returned from the Horticultural, and her exquisitely embroidered muslin dress, with the cashemere as fine as a cobweb, and the airy hat, and its graceful plumes, were not yet laid aside.—The children too, had been there for the first time, and were almost extravagantly dressed, but still. . . . She seemed so fond, and so proud, and looked so bright, when the little voices shouted “Mamma,” that what could I say, but bless her for her kindness to them, and fervently trust no future changes would ever make her love them less;—but it was not likely—it was hardly possible that the creature, whose eyes filled with sparkling tears, at their inno-

cent show of affection, would ever be less than kind to them. Then her conduct to me!—the anxious care she took to keep in the background, as much as possible, until the first rebellion of my wounded pride subsided; and the earnest manner in which she always “shared the government,” with me—the decided way in which she used to say to the governess, when appealed to, on any point relating to the children,

“I am sure, Miss Carrysfort knows best—suppose you consult her, and what she says must be your guide, of course—her head is worth ten of mine.”

And yet I was not happy—no! it was impossible—it might be my own unfortunate temper; but little things, over which Lady Carrysfort had no control, galled me to the quick. Though of course, visitors always left two cards, I knew that “Lady,” and not “Miss” Carrysfort was the object of their calling.—At dinner, though

my place was at the side, I remembered I had not always sat there;—when guests assembled, it was no longer for me to wait, till all had paired off, and then walk down mistress of the house; no—it was she, who had superseded me, who was to sink me to my level! Oh, I was wretched!—inexpressibly wretched!—but this was indeed a morbid, aye, a guilty feeling.

One morning Lady Carrysfort was very busy, or appearing to be very busy, drawing a pattern for a frock, for Rose, and I sat reading in the window. I had nothing to do now but read! I could not work, for it allowed a play of the thoughts, and the imagination, which would have maddened me;—still bending assiduously over her work, she said to me, in a voice which told me in a moment she knew all—

“Ada, dear—do you remember anything

of a man, whom we used to know, a Colonel Denison ?”

My book fell at this moment, and before I could recover it, and reply, she continued,

“Sir Edmund seemed quite astonished, the other day, when I told him what he had never heard, of the death of the poor divorcée.”

“*Dead ?*” I murmured, in a husky tone.

“Gone, poor thing, to account for her follies, or her crimes, whichever it was, in another world.”

“How long ago ?” was all I could say.

“Dear me,” said Lady Carrysfort, looking out of the window, as if to consider, and recollect; “it must be full a year—oh, more!—it was long before you went to Cornwall. I mean, dearest Ada, it was when you were at Hastings—yes, just after he sailed . . . Rose, my pet, and Carry dear, who will help mamma, to hunt for her scissors ?”

I went to my room—I sank on my knees—not, alas ! with the humble prayer of other days upon my lips, but with my heart full of worldly rancour, and bitterness, and words of sinful rebellion issuing from them.

Free ! free for fourteen weary months, and he had never come to claim me. Free ! and he had never written to tell me so !—I was wild, frantic ;—all, all, *all* had forsaken me now !—the one faint gleam that glimmered in my horizon, was extinguished ; the single hope I had nurtured, and cherished, of escape from my bondage, was shattered—I was now alone, indeed !—And Maule, my enemy Maule Carrysfort ! — where was he, that he did not come, and drop the venom in my ear ? They told me he was ill—that he had had a paralytic stroke, and that he was a cripple.—Oh, I remember nothing of these times, save the brightness of the home I

lived in, and the inward darkness of my own heart !

Summer came—Parliament was prorogued, as usual, and my father and Lady Carrysfort proposed going down to Carrysfort. I remember the kind, and feeling way in which *she* asked me, if I were going to accompany them.

“ Well, Ada, dear ! when shall *we* begin to pack ? ”

No—I was not going with them ; I was not going to throw myself again in the way of Maule Carrysfort, and have some fresh blight flung on my existence—no.

“ Dear, dear Mrs. Hillier, take me with *you* ! ”

That was all I said ; and she took me to Brighton, to scorch up and down the red pavement, and the shiny black pavement, and look into the shop windows. I

may be blamed for having deserted my little sisters; but my excuse is ready—they did not want me now!—no—no one in the wide world, found me necessary to their existence!—or even to their happiness.

CHAPTER XXV.

WINTER came ; at least autumn was passing ; Lady Carrysfort wrote to tell me, that they were coming home, and that she was longing to see me, and whisper to me what a wretch she thought Maule Carrysfort was.

A few days before we were to leave Brighton, as Mrs. Hillier and I were walking up and down the eternal Cliff, we were joined by an old navy captain, a Captain Fletcher, who always walked about with a telescope—he came to ask me if I had ever seen a yacht—he little knew the anguish his question awoke.

“Because,” he added, “I’ve just rowed round that yacht off the pier—she came in since last night.”

“And her name?” said I, with the greatest indifference.

“The Seraph—Captain Kynaston’s.”

“Home—home,” I whispered to Mrs. Hillier, feeling perfectly certain I could endure no more, and the old lady crossed to Regency Square.—As we walked up, in spite of all my hints and squeezings of her hand, she persisted in begging Captain Fletcher to tell Harry Kynaston, that she was at Brighton,—“she loved him as her own son—she had not seen him for nearly two years—she *must* see him, and Captain Fletcher was on no account to fail to communicate her wishes to him.”

All the next day, I locked myself in my room in vain, for no Harry Kynaston appeared; and when at last I came down, faint and weary, to amuse the old lady at her dinner, I had not

been five minutes in the room, before, unannounced, he burst into our presence ; and flinging his arms round Mrs. Hillier, with all his boyish impetuosity, he smothered her withered cheek with kisses. It was some moments before he knew I was in the room, and then he staggered back as if he had been shot.

“Ada!—good God! *is it* Ada!—how changed, how strangely altered!—Oh! Mrs. Hillier, how she reminds me of

It was a dreadful meeting!—He had been in the Mediterranean for the last twelvemonth; therefore, all the letters that I had addressed, “Poste Restante, Naples,” had never reached him; for, with his habitual thoughtlessness, he forgot to tell us he was cruising about, and not stationary in any port for more than a month.—Thus, the changes in our family were all news to him.

“And you came to Brighton for your health, Ada, of course?” he remarked, as he turned

from Mrs. Hillier, and fixed his eyes on me with a scrutinizing glance.

“No, Harry—I am not ill,” was my answer.

“But you look ill,” said he, quickly; “you don’t look yourself—you should stay at Brighton till November is quite over.”

“Oh! I’m afraid,” interrupted Mrs. Hillier, “that we *must* leave to-morrow, for Lady Carrysfort wrote only a few days ago, to say”

“Ha—indeed!” muttered Captain Kynaston, compressing his lips; “so you *must* go, must you?”

He was changed;—he looked older, and he was sadder—his jet-black hair was dashed with grey—the tone of his voice was altered, too; in short, he was not the same Harry Kynaston whom we had known in other days, so “gay and gladsome;” but he had brought his warm, impassioned feelings back again—he had not lost the impetuous character of his manners, nor the hearty “*bonhomme*” of his address—

yet there were times when his laughing eye looked dim and drooping, and a quivering sigh trembled to his lips.—I knew what he was thinking of then !

“ Ada,” said he, to me, as he wrung my hand at parting, “ I shall be in town very soon—look happier if you can, my poor dear girl!—give me a gladder welcome, if you can manage it; and try to keep those eyes from tears, if it be in the power of possibility.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

I AM thinking of closing the pages of my history ;—little remains to be told ; and what *has* been told, will suffice to show, that I did not grow “on the sunny side of the wall!”—Away, however, with repinings.—Stormy, as were my early days, I had a season of calm happiness vouchsafed me, for which I have every reason to be most grateful.

There is a warning, however, which I would convey to the other sex, before I continue my recital, which they would do well to bear in mind. I teach the lesson, having learned it

from experience—I do not address it to women, because, in *my* case, *pique* was the cause of all my happiness—I speak to men only:—never pique the woman you love!—despite the cruelty, the torture, it is a miserable policy,—do not delude yourselves with the idea, that by piquing a woman, you increase her interest *in*, and her affection *for*, you;—it may sometimes be the case, but—

“Ogni medaglio ha il suo reverso.”

And it is utterly impossible to imagine, to what a woman will resort, if she be acting under the influence of pique.—I went to the extreme verge of a woman's power—*I married!*—I never repented the step for a day or an hour! I had no cause. But he, at whose expense I thus acted, did he not suffer? pass on . . . 'tis vain to question or to blame . . . 'tis all gone by!

“Adelaide, you think I do not love you!—you think the transfer too improbable—you tell me I am deceiving myself.—*I am not!* I love you truly, devotedly, for your own sake; and I worship you, for the sake of her who was taken from us.—Adelaide, do not waver!—trust to me; if it is possible to make you happy on earth, by Heaven! you shall never say I failed!”

It was Captain Kynaston who was speaking, yet still I wavered. I remembered the conversation between him and our blessed Gertrude, on the verandah, at Penzance; and my heart failed me, when I thought he might be acting under a sense of sacred duty, in accordance with the promise given to the Lost One, that he would never desert me.—Then again, that could hardly be, because he had been long enough in town, to see that I had not an unhappy home—he was not taking me from wretchedness;—the out-

ward aspect of my home was brighter than nine out of ten which he might enter—he saw that I was unhappy certainly, and he penetrated the cause—he saw I lived for nothing in this world, and he implored me to live for him;—his love for me, was not the same deep adoration, which he evidently used to feel for Gertrude, but he was warm and devoted; he told me, that if I refused him, it would be the final blight on his happiness—he seemed to cling to me as something left of Gertrude, and I never knew how deep his heart was, till I placed both my hands in his, when I accepted him. It was impossible not to return the affection of such a man—so open, upright, amiable, and impassioned a character—so I accepted him. I acknowledge it was done under the strongest influence of pique, and indignation;—pride was at the bottom of it all, because I would

not stoop to wait any longer for Colonel Denison! People may censure me for this; but let no one judge me, save those who had my temper and disposition, so violent, and so precipitate, and who were as bitterly tried.—They may say I ought to have been punished; yet why?—I engaged myself to Captain Kynaston, firmly believing I could make him a good, and a devoted wife, and I never, *never* repented the step!—Colonel Denison's conduct, whether intentional or accidental, had roused my resentment, and my nature could not get over it;—he had wounded my pride, and that made me recoil from seeing him again—I could use a better expression—it had given me a turn against him! Not so Harry Kynaston—he had loved another, it is true, but then that other was my sister!

It was with my mind impressed and overflowing with these thoughts, that I rushed

into the engagement, with the heedless, reckless, impetuosity, of a Carrysfort. — I only dreaded one event, and that made me consent the more readily to a hurried marriage—it was Colonel Denison's return! — Strange contradiction of human nature! — had he returned, even to my feet, I would have married Captain Kynaston, in my present temper, before his eyes! — so bitterly, so poignantly, was I smarting from pique! — so fevered was my anxiety to rise superior, and avenge myself! Reader, do not turn from me with disgust.

“ I congratulate you with every bit of heart I have saved ! ” cried Lady Carrysfort, in one of her mad fits of delight ; “ what a man you have chosen ! — such a winning creature ! just my style ! exactly my *beau ideal* ! — if he had come in my way — in the character of a lover, I mean, two or three

years ago, people would never have wondered at my having refused Hugh Daubigny, as they did!—Nay, dear Ada, no grave looks!—it was only a flash of my young days!”

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was with a feeling of horror and trepidation, which may perhaps be called superstitious, that I was told by my father, through Lady Carrysfort, a few days before the one fixed for my marriage, that Maule Carrysfort was in town, lying dangerously ill at Hatchett's, and earnestly conjuring me to allow him to speak to me, if only three words.

I paced the room in indescribable agony.—Lady Carrysfort delivered the message in the most gentle, yet impressive, manner :—she saw what I was enduring—she knew what I

dreaded; yet she told me the message of a dying man was imperative—that the last words from dying lips could not inflict torture willingly—that he, who was on the threshold of another world, and about to render up his last account at the final Tribunal, would hardly utter aught but undisguised truth . . . she implored me to go!

“If Harry could but support me at such a death-bed, I could bear it!” I exclaimed, wildly.

“Ada, Ada!” said Lady Carrysfort, reproachfully, “you forget that, considering what the nature of Maule’s communication may be, such a thing would be *impossible!*—but you have *me!*”

Yes—I had *her*—I had *her* heart to lean on—her steady, dauntless, tender heart; I wavered only two days, and then I went.

It was evening—the evening but one before my marriage, and I stood in the presence of

the dying man—my enemy!—He was on a sofa;—I gave one glance, and saw that he looked ghastly and horrible, and that his feeble hands were stretched towards me, but I then hid my face on Regina's shoulder . . . call me weak! call me puerile!—I could not help it, for I was in a state of nervousness, baffling all description.

“Ada Carrysfort! you have come at the eleventh hour!”

Such were the first words that met my ear, and they were groaned forth in such a tone of both mental and bodily suffering, that I could hardly understand them.—I did not answer, for the clear, ringing voice of Regina, made my excuses.

“Come near,” said the dreadful voice again, as she insisted on drawing me nearer to the sofa; “come—Ada Carrysfort, I *will* speak once more to you—nearer, nearer—stoop down

—I'm dying, and I've still so much to say—stoop lower, girl!—*is it true?*”

These words were gasped out, in a low, hoarse whisper, and I knew they related to my marriage.

“Quite true,” I answered, with the energy of a desperate person.

“Wait!” he cried, raising himself with an effort on his elbow, and peering into my face, with the eyes of a lynx; “wait, Adelaide!—a—
—a letter reached me to-day . . . the first for many . . . many months!—only wait, Adelaide! and *you will get yours too!*”

“Never!” said I; “I know why I was summoned to you, Maule Carrysfort, but I also know what is due to myself.—If you summoned me to entreat my pardon, for all your wickedness and cruelty, God knows you may die in peace, for I forgive you from the bottom of my heart!—but, if you think to change my resolution by any vile fabrication”

“Stop her!” cried he, with his imploring eyes turned to Lady Carrysfort, as I was leaving the room; “stop her!—I’ve been wicked, I know; but not in *this* case!—I’ve been cruel, but I repent now!—Ada—Ada!—stop—stop—at least take this, and before you commit a rash act, *read!*”

And he held out to me a soiled and crushed letter, which he pushed into the hand I was obliged to offer.

“Good-bye!” he added, as my fingers remained in his grasp—“good-bye—for ever!”

I went home—and from the door of that room, to the entrance of my own, not a syllable passed between Lady Carrysfort and myself.—It matters not whether a person be indifferent or hateful to you, the same feeling of awe and sadness, tinges the feelings with which you look upon them for the last time. I felt sure I should never see Maule Carrysfort again; and yet, as a being about to be recalled by his

Maker, I had left him without any outburst of bitterness, or indignation.

I gave Regina the letter.

"Will you not read it?" said she, gently.

"Not," I exclaimed, "if you think it will have any influence on my resolution!"

"Shall I read it first, and tell you?"

"Do," was my answer; and I threw myself on my bed, till her voice broke the silence again.

"Shall I give you my advice, dear Ada?"

"Yes—but in a few words."

"Then let me burn, or return this letter—your destiny is all but completed—do not read this, unless you wish to avert it."

"Burn it," I answered, rising with a feeling of giddiness and faintness; "but . . . is . . . he . . . *coming*?"

"He mentions having resigned his situation; and then he repines at never having received an answer to any of the three letters he has written to you; and he says he has waited till he can wait no longer . . ."

“Then he *is* coming,” I cried, as I flung myself back with a burst of petulance; “as Heaven is my witness, I never received one!—but it is too late—Regina, I *will* not retract!”

Does not retribution follow close upon the track of error?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was a week after my marriage with Captain Kynaston, and I sat on a sofa, in the blue drawing-room, at Carrysfort Park. It was on that very sofa, three years before, that I had parted from the writer of a letter, I held in my hand, which I had received on my wedding-day! The letter was not only blistered, but it was *steeped* in tears—the last I ever shed for him; I was wrong to shed them, at all, but I look upon them now, as a tribute,

a final tribute, to the man whom . . . perhaps . . . I wronged!—

The letter was brief, even to abruptness, but the soul of the man was in every word :—

“ Once more, dearest Adelaide, I address you, as I have been used to do—it is for the fourth and last time, because this letter will be swiftly followed, by my own arrival. I can no longer endure this torture of uncertainty ; and I come, my own, my beloved Ada, to prove to you, that the vow I inwardly breathed when I parted from you—the vow of returning to claim you, the moment I knew I could do so with perfect freedom, has been religiously kept. When *she* died, I wrote to you ;—it is true, you did not reply, but then I wrote again, to say, I remained here till common respect to her memory allowed me to return. I wrote a third time, to implore an answer ; but now, dearest Adelaide, I entreat you to give it me in person !—Rumours

have reached me, too idle to be credited—never, for one instant, have I ever doubted you!—

“Yours entirely and devotedly,

“ERNEST DENISON.”

My tears were swallowed—they were dried—the quivering lips were calmed—the crimson cheeks cooled—and I was myself again, for ever! Back, back went these memories into the fathomless abyss of the past, for I was another's wife, and of mine own free will. I gave myself to him once—once only I thought of him again, and then it was thus:—

“Thou hast been true to me
Through many weary years,
And thine hopes have held resistlessly
Dominion o'er thy fears—
Hope has been strong in thee,
Unquenched by time and space,
And the tale that rumour told of me
Could find no resting place!

“Thou hast been true to me
Through all that could estrange—
And thy spirit spurned indignantly
The bare idea of change.
Yet was I false to thee!
I shared not in thy vow—
It was breathed to Heaven silently,
And stands unbroken now.”

A week after this, the bell of the village church tolled, as a funeral procession passed through—they were bearing a Carrysfort to the family vault. Maule Carrysfort was gone—the wretched attorney was dead—and from that time my fortune seemed to brighten. Years, long years passed by, without a single cloud to dim the brightness of my summer sky; and as a wife, I was the happiest of the happy, until . . . a time of sorrow came . . . bud after bud, blossom after blossom, child after child grew to bless me for my care, and then . . . to leave me! Many a young Kynaston, claimed a tablet in our

village church—one after one, had been laid in its beautiful grave-yard, and there seemed a blight upon my name ; but then I had two, just two out of many, most mercifully spared,—one little Gertrude, and God be thanked, for the sake of his father's honoured name, a glorious son.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I HAD been married nine years, when once again I sat within my old home in Richmond Gardens, over a bright Christmas fire, in our ancient boudoir;—three of us were there, and one was a widow—*her* brow had borne the coronet, and a haughty brow it was, even to that day.

The other was a lovely woman still, and she was amply occupied in laughing and talking to us, deciding the battle of two boys in the corner of the room, and warming the exquisite little stockingless feet, of the baby on her lap;—

there was a wildness in her mirth, which told her to be the same high-spirited Regina, of the days of our girlhood. I had been her guest now for some months, for my husband had got a ship, and had been obliged to join the fleet.

Frances was in the second year of her widowhood, preserving much of her youthful look, and some of her former beauty, yet now bearing in her turn, the title of the Dowager Countess of Ellerslie. The change on her face, was an expression of peevishness and discontent, and she appeared to be utterly indifferent to everything—even to the graceful little Lady Adelaide Crewe, whose title in infancy, it may be remembered, was always, “that unhappy baby!”

Two more of us, two tall slight girls, were standing in the next room, over a large vase, arranging flowers; and they were the Rose and Carry, of “other days,” now preparing to enter the world, with much more of joyousness than

had marked the debüt of the elder sisters. They seemed to have caught some of the bounding mirthfulness of their mother-in-law, for the tone of the innocent gaiety pervading that house, was a blessing to be felt, more than to be expressed. The very atmosphere seemed to owe its lightness, to the glad, free spirit of Lady Carrysfort, whose winning manners had at last overcome the prejudices of *even* Frances.

The widowed Countess was with us almost every day. She was a disheartened, dispirited creature, and she looked upon Regina as one of the wonders of the world—a perfectly happy woman!—happy in spite of cares, and exercising irresistible sway over the happiness of others. I remember to this day, that the simple sound of Regina's voice, as she entered a room, uttering the word "Well!" in her gay, clear tones, was quite enough to chase away on the instant all "*les vapeurs noirs*."

“Well!” she exclaimed, turning suddenly round, and looking through the open doors, into the next room, “what were we talking about?—is Rose within hearing?—oh, no—there she is.”

“Harmlessly employed,” I added, as I looked in the same direction.

“Yes—it *looks* harmless enough,” continued Lady Carrysfort, laughing; “but appearances are deceitful, and I happen to know from whence those flowers came!—I declare I am quite tired of the sight of a certain dark-green cab! I don’t like young men giving flowers to girls—it is foolish of me, when I know that we have all had our time of nonsense; but it puts me quite in a rage, to see Rose snipping those silly flowers, till they are dried sticks and stalks. Then it’s so provoking to be obliged to pretend not to know, what has become of them, when they are dead!—Ada, you don’t look sympathetic?”

“No—I’m laughing.”

“Adding insult to injury—but really I thank my stars, I have only sweet Rose and Carry, to introduce and marry off; for positively, if all these flowers were sent to myself, and *I* were the blushing object of all these delicate attentions, instead of Rose, I could not feel more than I now do. I declare it is, or rather it must be, quite a mercy to be born with a callous heart. I’ve wished for that possession more fervently than for any other treasure in the world—Oh! you boys!—what an awful row you are making!—it is impossible to enjoy any sort of rational conversation, with you in the room.”

Regina was right, as far as that exclamation went;—she made a point of addressing them thus every few minutes, but it did no good—the “row” went on all the same.

“But Ada, of what were we talking?” was

the sentence, which led her thoughts back to the rational conversation again.

“*Apropos*,” asked Frances, who had been in a profound reverie, and awoke at the first pause, “who saw Colonel Denison’s death in the papers?”

“I, said the fly, with my little eye,” cried Lady Carrysfort; “I saw the death—Adelaide pointed it out to me.”

“It was I, mamma!” exclaimed Rose, from the adjoining room; “and if you do not wish us to join in your conversation, we had better shut this door.”

“Close it, there’s a dear—not quite, for that shuts the noise of those boys in with us; and I can see your head is aching, Frances—but about Colonel Denison, Ada?”

“Poor Rose,” said I, smiling; “I saw her eyes filling, and heard her voice falter, when she read it to my father, amongst the other deaths.”

“Yes,” interrupted Frances; “and to give you an idea of her feelings on those subjects, I heard her telling Carry, that it was seeing his name mingled so carelessly with the rest, and hearing it casually mentioned, that wounded her!”

“How sensitive that girl is still!” exclaimed Regina; “I remember, years ago—oh! it must be twelve years, when you were all out of town—Sir Edmund, and that terrible Miss Sharp-ham, both being so angry, because Rose would not learn her lessons; but sat sobbing and crying, after hearing the report of *the ship having been drowned!*—what did the announcement say?”

Frances listlessly extended her hand for the paper, and read:—“Died on the 2nd September, at Bogota, in the 51st year of his age, Lieut.-Colonel Denison, of the Holme, Yorkshire.”

“Ah!—thank you—fifty-one sounds a very

unromantic age," was Regina's remark ;—and then I began to reflect. How utterly, and how strangely the world metamorphoses sentiments and feelings !—what an entire revolution, does a lapse of years effect !—To think that she, who had suffered the wildest, deepest agonies, the heart could endure, should now be listening, all but unmoved ; exhibiting nothing, save the coldest regret, and smiling at passing sallies, roused by the name of him, who, nine short years before, had caused that agony, and crushed that breaking heart !

Is it wonderful if I here ask, where is the "memory of love," which poets love to vaunt ? It is not a modern feeling, I fear ; or could I have sat unmoved, during the preceding dialogue ? and yet never, in one instant in my life, was I ever accused of being heartless. I do not mean that I should have mourned for Colonel Denison, with anything like *grief*.—Since that episode of my early days, I had become a wife, and a

mother ; new affections, and new ties, had sprung up to sever and estrange me, still more from its recollection—duty too, would have had its effect, in quelling and quenching a rebellious retrospect ; but I mean, that I examined my inward feelings minutely, in the pauses of the dialogue, and was most certainly astonished at the power of *time*, thus to have been able to steep in oblivion, feelings so poignant, and so vivid, as mine once were, for Colonel Denison. The conversation that followed, will prove this still more;—it will prove, that there is much more of romance than of reality, in our thoughts of the past. “The past is the poet’s;” and those who live in the world, live for the *present*, “the actual of life.”

“The working-day portion of life’s wondrous whole!” and those whose past has been clouded, had better not look back to it, if it only wake “vain repining;” therefore, perhaps I was happy in being able to revert without regret or

remorse, and to listen to, and smile at, that merry-hearted Regina's remarks, and quaint conversation.

Frances was the first who spoke after the pause, and she said with a sigh, "Ah, Ada! what a love that was of yours!"

"I'm not sure," I replied; "I dare say I thought so at the time; but"

"At all events, he was your first love?"

"Oh no!" exclaimed Lady Carrysfort; "young Hugh Daubigny was your first, Ada!—shall you ever forget that story of mine?"

"Your whole conduct to him before his marriage, in his gay bachelor days," said I, laughing, "was malicious to a degree!"

"The ruling passion of tormenting!" cried Regina, with her joyous ringing laugh; "it was literally breaking a butterfly on the wheel!—but I *do* think I did him good—I made him a steady benedict, you see—pinched his radiant wings; and took off a little of their bright-

coloured down!—there was no harm done, for man and insect were alike there—the insect feels the pinch, but he flutters away; and so did Hugh, just as if nothing had happened.—I should like to know how many loves Hugh Daubigny had, before he married the girl whom nobody ever dreamt of his running after?”

“Our first love need not be the best loved,” said I, the moment I could find room for a syllable.

“No,” added Frances; “no one marries their first love, and very few marry for love at all.”

“True!” laughed Regina, drawing her chair into the fire almost, and looking at us with a glance of arch merriment; “we three, for instance!—matrons of nine, ten, and thirteen years standing—come! what did we marry for?—(My loves of boys, *will* you be quiet!—Herbert, you are *not* to knock your brother’s

house down—you must build elsewhere, if this riot continues.) *Allons, Frances !* ”

“ I ? ” said the Countess, passing her gemmed hand languidly over her beautiful forehead, and hiding a lurking smile ; “ Oh—love, I suppose.”

“ Oh, oh !—think again, *signora Contessa !* ”

“ Well, rank—my coronet, perhaps,” rejoined my sister, sadly ; “ but I think I have paid the price of my ambition. I dare say I could have loved Ellerslie in time, if he would have allowed me to respect him ;—indeed, at his deathbed, I felt some emotion very like affection.”

“ You married from ambition—for rank,” interrupted Regina, so playfully, that she never wounded the object of her attack ; “ own it, my peeress, and I will go on to Ada.”

“ Not quite,” smiled Frances ; “ remember, when Ellerslie selected me, he was the ‘ cyno-

sure ' of many sparkling eyes, and my vanity was flattered ; and you know

‘ We women swim not with our hearts,
Nor yet our judgments, but the world's opinions ! ’ ”

“ How true, but what a worldly sentiment ! ”
said I, abstractedly.

“ I never denied being a worldling,” was the abrupt reply ; and there was an asperity in the sentence, which made Lady Carrysfort call us to order ; and caused Frances, in her turn, to shake off her momentary ill-humour, and say she had only spoken in “ the language of the house.”

“ Now for Ada !—Ada, who sits there with her large loving eyes, and her demure and pensive mouth.”

“ I can answer in a moment,” said I, hastily, for I dreaded the lash.

“ Then proceed ! ” continued Lady Carrysfort.

“ For love,” said I, very much irritated.

“ Never, never, my dear soul ! not you !—

you married from pique ; you know you did ! and so did Hugh Daubigny, because I refused well, don't frown, Ada ! but it *may* run in the family !—you *did* marry from pique, and I would stake one of my baby's bright curls, that you are more in love with Harry now, than you were the day you married him ! There's only one person in the whole circle of my acquaintance, whom I can say married for love."

"Rose, of course."

"Rose is not married yet—I did not think of her, because she would give but one answer—I mean of my married circle."

"Who ?" enquired both Frances and myself, with equal curiosity, and eagerness ; "who can you possibly mean ?"

"Those boys will drive me wild," cried Lady Carrysfort, jumping up, and chasing her children out of the room, before her ; "I can stand many things, you Masters Carrysfort, but not the din of your battles in my boudoir !"

“Ada!” said Frances, mysteriously, when our young mother-in-law left the room, “who in the world could she have meant?”

“She forgot our presence for the moment,” was my reply; “I am convinced she alluded to herself.”

CHAPTER XXX.

A FEW days after this, we all repaired to Carrysfort Park, for the recess. The spring had commenced early, and the country was in its freshness and beauty. Regina insisted on me and my *two*, and Frances and her *one*, being of the party, and the Countess reluctantly consented—I say reluctantly, because she was not in strong health, and dreaded what she called the “racket” of the establishment. Her own was conducted so very tranquilly, that it was almost melancholy—her very servants seemed to move breathlessly—I firmly believe, that

such was the state of nerves into which she had fallen, that, had the gorgeous shoulder-knot of one of her powdered domestics rung upon a plate at table, she would have discharged him, as guilty of noisy attendance!—Adelaide, too, the girl, was such a strange little mortal—elegant, graceful and polished, as education had made her,—

“For seldom smiled
The serious child;
And as she passed from childhood, grew
More far between, those smiles, and few,
More sad and wild.”

Thus it was not wonderful that the worn and weary Countess, shrank from the glare and the glitter of the festive Carrysfort Park; and I was not surprised when she said to me, a few days after our arrival,

“Well!—this may be what Regina calls ‘very good fun,’ but I do not think my nerves can support it;—how *you* can live in such a

Babel, I cannot imagine, Ada!—As to Lady Carrysfort, she is wilder than ever, and those boys! those dreadful boys, building houses and bridges all over the rooms, with their odious bricks . . . how do you support their existence?”

“Love!” said I, laughing, “love, I am afraid, for everything that can be called a Carrysfort!”

“It was not always so,” murmured the Countess.

“No,” I answered warmly; “thank God! we do not go through life with the same sentiments, opinions, and prejudices!—if we did, I should not be quite so tranquil in my mind at this moment, as I am—depend upon it, those people are the happiest who adapt themselves to circumstances.”

“How little I ever expected to hear these sentiments from your lips, Ada,” said Frances, with swimming eyes—“you, whom I have seen

in such agonies of grief and anguish!—you, who were such a smothered volcano, such a passionate creature as a girl!”

“Years were given, *granted* me rather, to learn submission to every decree,” was my reply; “and the first lesson experience taught me, was the uselessness of rebelling against a lot, which the wisdom of a higher Power appointed for me—therefore . . . I floated with the current!”

“And many a sharp rock have you dashed against!” interrupted Frances, with a touch of her ancient bitterness and sarcasm.

“Possibly,” was my equally tart reply; “but I came to the ocean at last.”

“I cannot think,” persisted Frances, “that that justifies you in forgetting the current of your early days.”

I saw through the peevishness that prompted this sentence, and I answered as temperately as I could.

“Alas ! dear Frances, why should I remember the past, if it is to embitter the present?—My creed has always been, ‘Look to the end,’ the motto of the Carrysforts.”

We were here interrupted by Lady Carrysfort—she always brought sunshine into a room ; but if she had left a little of her vivacity behind her, it would have suited the frames of mind of her daughters-in-law much better, for she came to rally us for “moping.”

“Always the way!—when two married sisters get together, they either croak, or quarrel—you have been doing both, and you must not deny it.—I see it by the spot on Frances’s cheek, and the tears in Ada’s eyes ; you have been canvassing some disagreeable subject, which is contrary to all my rules.”

She might well say that !—During our ten days at Carrysfort Park, an unexpected arrival roused us all into even more excited action.—Hugh Daubigny’s regiment had been ordered

home—it had returned—it had even landed ; and Hugh wrote to me, knowing I was at home, to ask me if I thought he should be welcome, if he came for a day or two to renew his old friendship ;—he promised to bring no *encumbrances*, for Mrs. Hugh was to be left with the Merediths at Dieppe, where they had settled. I took the letter to Regina, and she was enchanted.

“ Hugh, that handsome Hugh !—my pet of all pet butterflies !—how very delightful,—and without his wife too ! charming ! You know I had always a little spite against her, so it is as well for our peace that she is not coming, though I should make a point of behaving well, had she accompanied him.—However, express to him, Ada dear, all my pleasure, and all your pleasure, —in short, suppose I write myself ?—why should I not ?—if only for the glory of signing myself, his very affectionate aunt, Regina Carrysfort !—fancy the amusement of signing aunt !”

But my father preferred *my* writing the welcome; and from the moment that it was despatched, little else was talked of but Hugh Daubigny.

“Eleven years since he went!” rattled Lady Carrysfort; “and he was four-and-twenty then—he must be a little altered of course; but still it will be a pleasure to see the old face again, and his moustaches will change him, if he wears moustaches.—Ada, what do you think?—have I magnified his attractions during his absence, or was he not handsome?”

Yes—we all agreed my cousin Hugh did not disgrace us by being ugly, and then followed Lady Carrysfort’s thousand reflections and suggestions; in short, Frances and I were most heartily weary of Captain Daubigny, long before he arrived. Regina was sometimes quite childish, and her present idea was, that she felt nervous at seeing the man whom she insisted on calling her victim!—she thought he would bear malice perhaps, and treat her with

coldness ;—but it would be impossible to enumerate the silly fancies she took into her head, and I confess I wondered at my father's patience in listening to them.—Hugh's arrival however, put a stop to them, and Regina was out in the grounds when he came. The great bell was rung to recall her to the house, and in the mean time I gazed in speechless astonishment at the altered figure of my cousin Hugh. In the first place, his clothes were cut in the most extraordinary fashion ; and though a lady may not be a good judge of the precise minutiae of dress, still she can possess an excellent eye for the *tout ensemble*, and Hugh must have had an Indian tailor. Then his hair was a disorderly mass of waves and curls. One of the first speeches he made to me, after the words of greeting, was, “ I fancy my hair wants cutting ; ” and I was obliged to tell him, as gently as I could, that it was no fancy. Then he had grown positively fat !—fat, when his chief beauty had

been the upright grace of his slim but athletic figure!—his clear dark skin was reddened, and he acknowledged that he had had “a touch of the liver,” which gave a yellow tint by no means favorable to the general appearance—in short, I never saw a man so changed!—The old clerk of the parish, who examined him over his spectacles, during service the following Sunday, made the most expressive observation of any of us, and that was—“Master Hugh looks horrid bad,” and so he did.

Lady Carrysfort had been very busy in a hothouse at some distance, when the visitor's bell rang, and knowing we should entertain whoever it was, and little dreaming it could be Hugh, she never returned till the first dinner-bell—I called him to the window, as she walked across the lawn, to look at her, and asked him if he thought her much changed?

“’Pon my soul!” was his exclamation, “of

those four beautiful women, I don't know which is Lady Carrysfort in the least !”

It was hardly to be wondered at; for at a distance, Regina, Frances and Carry looked all alike. They had all black hair. Frances wore hers in full bows; but Regina and Carry braided it back *à la Grisi*, and each had loops of heavy but beautiful plaits, resting on the very bend of their graceful necks, and they were of nearly the same height. Rose was lingering behind, with her shower of light ringlets flying in the air, looking sad and sentimental, but quite as pretty in my eyes as the rest.

I left the room before they entered it, because I was sure I should laugh if I remained; and in about ten minutes, the whole *cloud* of fair ones rushed to my door, demanding admittance, Regina at their head; and on opening to admit them, she flew in, and flung herself on my sofa, in fits of laughter.—“ Well, in all my existence !” she

exclaimed, when the power of speech returned, "I *never* saw such a fright !"

I was angry with myself for joining in the general laugh, for I knew that if once Regina held a person up to ridicule, he was a marked man ever after ; but it was hardly possible to help it in this instance. Her laugh alone, was enough to set me off, even when there was as little cause, as on the present occasion. I tried to persuade her that my cousin Hugh required nothing but "brushing up," after eleven years residence under a broiling sun ; but she said nothing would ever make him what he used to be.

The hour-and-a-half at the dinner table, proved that the change in the once gallant *cupidon* was not only in his personal appearance. He talked so loud, that I thought Frances would have left the room ; and when he laughed, it was such a roar, that the Countess and her nerves were all but annihilated. I pitied her, for she sat next

to him, and opposite to me,—so every time he began to speak, she curled up her eyebrows till her brow was covered with wrinkles.

No sooner were we assembled again in the drawing-room, than she sank into the first arm-chair, and Regina's voice rang out its merry note.

“*Hors de combat !* my poor dear Lady Ellerslie !”

“*De combat*, indeed !” groaned Frances ; “if he had been commanding a whole army, or besieging one of his eastern cities, he could not have exerted himself more. I really could not stand this again—one of us must go.”

“To think,” laughed Lady Carrysfort, turning to me, “that he was once a *beau ideal* of mine ! I never could have believed that time could have so effectually dispelled ‘the halo round the dear one’s head !’—Ye powers ! imagine such a head ever having a halo round it at all !”

“It is not kind to go on in this way,” was my answer ; “Hugh Daubigny has just landed

from a five months' voyage, which accounts for much of his appearance ; and his spirits, are owing to his pleasure at being in the midst of us all once more—it is unfair, this cutting *persiflage*."

"But he might have stopped one day in town, and been modernized!" persisted Lady Carrysfort.

"He is your guest," was my grave reply.

I confess I never could bear the system of "*persiflage*," or, as the English call it, quizzing. I pass over the unladylike part of the offence ; but I pause at the unkindness, almost amounting to cruelty, which tinctures that explosion of wit which gratifies few besides the speaker. No one can sit perfectly comfortable, and hear another quizzed ; a laugh may be raised, but those who possess any feeling, must know that it is at another's expense, therefore cruel, and may perchance, revert upon themselves.

Regina's nonsense never amounted to such a

pitch as to wound the feelings ; but she trembled on the verge of it, and often the quick glance of my father's eye, has arrested a speech, which would have sparkled from her lips the next moment, and have done some serious mischief, had she not learnt to study his looks for approbation, when she hazarded a brilliant repartee.

Hugh was dreadfully afraid of her, and she found it out directly—unfortunately, it gave new wings to her flights, and I often nailed myself for hours to her side, for fear they should come to open war. My father would sit and laugh, therefore his presence did more harm than good. Rose was always wandering by herself in the grounds, Carry was for ever in the nursery, and Frances glided away as fast as ever her languid dignity would permit her ; therefore Hugh was left entirely to me, and his hostess.

“ I fear Lady Carrysfort annoys you,” said I to him the morning he was leaving us, and after she had been going on in her usual course during breakfast.

“Not she!” was his indignant reply, as he drew himself up; “but upon my life, I do think it’s all *pique*!—she’s *serving me out*, for for you know I used to flirt with her, once and”

Heaven bless the man! was ever any vanity equal to this!

It was fortunate for him, that I dared not breathe such a reply as this, into her ear, for he would have suffered for it to the last day of his existence!

CHAPTER XXXI.

“ My lane of life is darkening toward a close ;
Some paces on, the boundary pillar shows
The landmark of existence ; whither brought,
I shall shrink up and wither into nought.”

I MAY well commence my final chapter with these lines, for blank verse conveys a sentiment more powerfully, than humble prose. My task is nearly done, and my boundary pillar gained. It is time that I should “ shrink up and wither into nought,” for I have run my race.

It was winter,—the very depth—some two

years from the time I last recorded,—and we were all spending it at Carrysfort Park, when the hand of Heaven struck a desolating blow upon the family of Carrysfort. My father, whose health had always been uninterrupted, and whose appearance bore testimony to the fact, was suddenly attacked by a fit of apoplexy, and the numerous and panic-struck members of his family, were severally informed that he had but a few hours to live !—It is in vain to attempt to describe the effect of this announcement—from the youngest to the eldest, the shock thrilled to our inmost souls, and we looked round upon each other, as if we were a group suddenly about to be dispersed by the awful stroke. In that dark hour, the bounding heart of Regina gave way, and that dauntless spirit quivered. *We* had all known sorrow, but she was a creature whom distress and grief had never approached—the only sighs and the only tears, that she had spent, had been for others, not herself ; and

when she stood in the midst of us, as we clung and clustered round her, in the room adjoining to that of the dying husband and father, she looked like a marble statue, cold, silent, and petrified with dismay.

At last she roused herself, for the sufferer became sensible, and he desired to see us all once more before him; and it was during that scene that the beautiful affection, and delicacy of the mother-in-law, shone out. By right, her place was first; and the places of her three children, being boys, might be supposed to rank before ours; but she was full of thought for the feelings of the orphan daughters—even in that season of anguish.

How well I see her at this very moment, leaning over the bed, with her beautiful face streaming with tears, convulsed with grief, and pressing the rosy cheek of the infant son, to his father's lips—then hurrying the last farewell of the two elder boys, and dismissing them

hastily from the dying presence, as if they had received their share, and must now give way to the four daughters of the first Lady Carrysfort!

Independently of the pang of her approaching bereavement, she was placed in a most painful and trying position, in which she carried herself with the generous rectitude of her character. She certainly *once* cowered down like a culprit. It was in the silence of that last awful night, when the faint voice of my father, murmured,

“My girls—are you all here?”

Her name had not passed his lips!—and perhaps her deep hollow sob, did not reach his ear, for the four voices of his daughters responded to the call one by one; but *she* was not named! There was no need for her to speak! and that sob will ring in my ears for ever—it was such a sound of harrowing despair. It appeared that she felt that sentence as proclaiming, that in death, the father clung to us, more

than to the others of his family—that he belonged more to us than to her!—

I whispered what I considered was our duty, to Frances. I told her we had received our parting tribute, the blessing had been breathed on us, and the last kiss given—we owed it to her affection, to leave the husband to his wife, when a very few moments would terminate the scene—it would be a satisfaction to her which she well merited, but which her considerate tenderness for us, would never prompt her to propose—as for *him* . . . a little space of time, would find him beyond the reach of worldly aid, or comfort . . .

One by one, we stole from the darkened chamber, and we never entered it again, while life was issuing from my father's lips. The morning light had just made everything visible in the room, where we had gathered, when Regina passed through on her way to her own. She was a widow.

She never raised her eyes, but she wrung the hand of each, as she passed, and articulated "Thank you all;" and I never saw her after that, until I sat by her side in the carriage, the morning we started for town.

Years have passed since this event; but Regina Carrysfort has never returned to what she was in her younger days—the gladness of her spirit has passed away for ever, and she moves in the circle of her acquaintance, an altered being;—nothing interests her now, except dwelling on the different dispositions and professions of the three sons, whom she still calls "My boys!"

For myself and my sisters—I have lived to give my daughter to a husband, my son to his father's profession, and my husband to myself; for the son took the father's occupation off his shoulders, when Harry grew too lazy to leave home. Frances remains the same creature she has been all her life; Rose has been a

matron for some time—she married the man who had wooed and won her, by robbing all the flower-gardens round London; and Carry, my sweet, my gentle Carry, is not married at all, which, I am afraid is rather a thorn in my side, for she might have been what people persist in calling “settled” (though Heaven knows it is anything but that) over and over again—and now,

“Thou hast given the grave both flowers and tears,
Oh love! thy task is done!”

THE END.

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